

This is a detailed investigation of Chaucer's poetics in two of his master works – *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Knight's Tale* – in relation to an important continental narrative tradition. It is the first such wide-ranging study since Charles Muscatine's seminal *Chaucer and the French Tradition* and the first book to argue in detail that Chaucer's poems, Boccaccio's *Filostrato* and *Teseida*, and the twelfth-century French *romans antiques* participate in a distinct formal tradition within the protean field of medieval romance. By close examination of the formal and ethical designs of each poem, Barbara Nolan explores both the compositional practices shared by all of the poets she discusses, and their calculated differences from each other. Her analysis culminates in a full examination of Chaucer's richly original responses to the continental verse narratives from which he borrowed. No other study offers so full and careful a delineation of the compositional features that distinguish the *roman antique* from other traditions of romance in the Middle Ages.

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Chaucer and the Tradition of the *Roman Antique*

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In memory of Carlo Pelliccia 1933–1988

Lo duca e io per quel cammino ascoso
intrammo a ritornar nel chiaro mondo;
e senza cura aver d'alcun riposo,
salimmo sù, el primo e io secondo,
tanto ch'i' vidi de le cose belle
che porta 'l ciel, per un pertugio tondo.
E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle.

(Dante, *La commedia*, ed. Georgio Petrocchi, vol. VII,
pt. 2 [Mondadori, 1966], p. 598)

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Abbreviations

<i>AA</i>	<i>Ars amatoria</i>
<i>ChauR</i>	<i>Chaucer Review</i>
<i>CCM</i>	<i>Cahiers de civilisation médiévale</i>
<i>DVE</i>	<i>De vulgari eloquentia</i>
<i>ELH</i>	<i>English Literary History</i>
<i>ES</i>	<i>English Studies</i>
<i>Her.</i>	<i>Heroides</i>
<i>IMU</i>	<i>Italia Medioevale e Umanistica</i>
<i>JWCI</i>	<i>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</i>
<i>MA</i>	<i>Le Moyen Age</i>
<i>MÆ</i>	<i>Medium Ævum</i>
<i>M&H</i>	<i>Medievalia et Humanistica</i>
<i>MED</i>	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i>
<i>MLN</i>	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
<i>MLQ</i>	<i>Modern Language Quarterly</i>
<i>MLR</i>	<i>Modern Language Review</i>
<i>MP</i>	<i>Modern Philology</i>
<i>MS</i>	<i>Medieval Studies</i>
<i>NLH</i>	<i>New Literary History</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association</i>
<i>PQ</i>	<i>Philological Quarterly</i>
<i>RPh</i>	<i>Romance Philology</i>
<i>SAC</i>	<i>Studies in the Age of Chaucer</i>
<i>SFI</i>	<i>Studi di Filologia Italiana</i>
<i>UTQ</i>	<i>University of Toronto Quarterly</i>
<i>YFS</i>	<i>Yale French Studies</i>

Introduction

In a charming domestic scene near the beginning of the second book of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Pandarus discovers his niece, listening, with two other women, to a maiden reading from a book. Pandarus asks Criseyde what she is reading, and she replies with detailed information:

This romance is of Thebes that we rede;
And we han herd how that kyng Layus deyde
Through Edippus his sone, and al that dede;
And here we stynten at thise lettres rede –
How the bisshop, as the book kan telle,
Amphiorax, fil thourgh the ground to helle. (II.100–5)¹

As Criseyde describes her “romaunce” of Thebes – including its classical matter, its vernacular language, and its character as a rubricated book – Chaucer is inviting his public to consider the lineaments of a specific, centuries-old form of continental narrative.

For his medieval audience (and for us), the Trojan heroine's reading poses several questions. Why would Criseyde have chosen so specific a book as the Thebes romance? By extension, what might Chaucer's audience, attending to his own *Troilus*, expect in making an exactly parallel choice? What moral and aesthetic experience might both audiences anticipate from their listening or reading? Even more pointedly, what might it mean for Chaucer's public when Criseyde puts her Thebes-book down? She prefers gossiping and dancing, while they (and we), presumably, continue to read or listen to the *Book of Troilus*. We can begin to address these and other, related questions only when we have understood, at least to some extent, what formal and ethical valence Criseyde's particular kind of *romaunce* would have been likely to carry for the English poet and his fourteenth-century courtly audience.

In this book I examine seven poems as they participate in precisely the literary tradition Chaucer invokes in his Trojan parlor scene. Not only does he depict Criseyde enjoying a vernacular account of the fall of Thebes; he is also responding, as he writes, to a group of medieval French and Italian narratives which all, I argue, share, by means of their design, in a distinctive

literary history. My first three chapters explore the interplay between form and matter in three mid-twelfth-century French poems written for the continental feudal court of Henry II Plantagenet and Eleanor of Aquitaine: the *Roman de Thèbes* (c. 1150), the *Roman d'Eneas* (c. 1155–60), and Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie* (c. 1155–70). The fourth and fifth chapters deal with Boccaccio's *Filostrato* and *Teseida*, composed in whole and part respectively in the environment of the Angevin King Robert's court in Naples (c. 1335–42). The concluding chapters concern two of Chaucer's most important verse-narratives – the *Book of Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Knight's Tale* (c. 1384–87) – both produced during Richard II's reign for an audience of “gentlepersons and clerks.”²

Throughout this study, I have preferred the term “form” to “genre” in tracing the development of a literary tradition. I want to emphasize the varied, but also historically related practices of each poet in reshaping materials and techniques borrowed from prior writers to suit his own poetic agenda. Throughout I use the word “form” to refer to the poets' acts of shaping, configuring, or containing the matter they are composing. What interest me are the specific ways in which they manipulate their inherited materials in order to develop systematic, but often indirectly presented, moral arguments. I examine each writer's habits of inclusion, exclusion, ordering, and transformation as he responds to prior texts, both Latin and vernacular, and disposes his *materia* to suit his own poetic and ethical purposes.

By calling all of the poems explored in this book *romans antiques* I do not mean to imply that by naming a tradition we can fully account for the specific formal or ethical dynamics of each text. I use the notion of a tradition as a pragmatic, heuristic tool, always focusing on the reciprocal relationship between the supposed tradition and the particular contours of each text in the group. We can be certain that poets writing in the tradition of the *roman antique* did not begin with *a priori* generic rules for the vernacular fictions they were composing. Yet they shared classically based ideas about rhetorical composition laid out in the handbooks of the medieval liberal-arts curriculum. They also took as their sources of authoritative moral wisdom the same core of classical texts (together with their medieval glosses) universally studied in the schools. In addition, the vernacular poets responded to each other, and the correspondences among their texts as a group have never before been examined in relation to questions of narrative technique, formal design, and ethical argument.

If the poetic of medieval writers was invariably ethical, as the late Judson Allen has persuasively argued,³ the authors of the *romans antiques*, instructing their secular audiences, did not all explore the same ethical

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systems. In every case I have tried to uncover not only the formal design but also the classically based paradigms of secular moral conduct (often unfamiliar to twentieth-century readers) to which each writer turned as he questioned the surface action of his narrative. In order to recuperate the *particular* moral argument of each work considered in this book, we must be able to recognize what specific values are being tested by and through the narrative process. Each of the poems with which we will be concerned implicates its own *collectio* of classical and post-classical Latin authorities as a foil against which to study the behavior and moral choices of pagan characters in concrete situations. None of the poems can or should be *reduced* to a particular set of moral values as if it were a philosophical treatise. Yet each author does argue in his own way that the good moral life requires a system of ethics. Each of their verse-narratives operates more or less fully as a middle ground between abstract theory and individual conduct. What gives the poems we are about to consider their particular poetic life is the dynamic interplay between one or more identifiable value-systems and the behavior of pagan characters shaping their lives in (or being shaped by) morally complex, difficult circumstances. By means of the poet's explorations, both the systems and the conduct of individuals are questioned.

At no point in this study do I mean to argue for a single, unbroken chronology from the twelfth-century *romans antiques* to Chaucer. Each of the three groups of poems (and each poem) belongs to its own time and place in specific, non-transferable ways. Three separate chronologies and three different languages are involved, and the poet's agenda in each case is strongly affected by his immediate social, political, and intellectual environment. Robert Escarpit has suggested that, from a sociological point of view, the "life" of specific forms or genres – for example, Elizabethan tragedy – is "generally from thirty to thirty-five years or half a lifetime."⁴ Each of the poems I examine is the product of a specific, and at least partially non-recoverable congeries of social, political, and intellectual conditions in a precisely delimited locale and time.⁵ The full inner life of any medieval work as it was designed by the poet and experienced by its original audience will necessarily elude us to some extent, in part because we have not lived through its historical moment. Yet we need not conclude that the formal and ethical principles governing a medieval text cannot be recovered at all. Exploring a poem's compositional design and its ties to other, related books can be of significant help in understanding that work's pleasures and moral functions for its original audiences as well as for ourselves.

To be sure, the conclusions we draw from our archaeological investigations will be biased by the limits of the evidence available to us as well as

our own cultural and personal prejudices and experience. Lee Patterson has articulated very well the delicate balance that necessarily obtains between “the present-as-subject” and the “past-as-object” in any act of critical interpretation. The negotiation between ourselves and the historical past that must go on in interpreting medieval texts is, as Patterson puts it, “elaborate and endless.”⁶ But the negotiation is nonetheless worth undertaking for the sake of enriching our understanding of the past as well as placing ourselves and our cultural situation in relation to what we can know of the past. We must recognize that this negotiation is not only unavoidable but also desirable in any literary analysis. A humanly useful reading will involve the coalescing of our own experience, both of life and of literature, with the voluntary, rigorous engagement of the text and its contexts *as other*.⁷ In this study, bearing Patterson’s cautionary advice in mind, I argue that we can enhance our understanding of individual medieval poems by examining them in their historically based formal ties to definable literary traditions. The compositional practices and artistic intentions of medieval writers are not only recoverable but worth recovering.⁸ Poems written at a great distance from us in time and place can be a rich source of aesthetic and moral pleasure insofar as we are willing to explore their otherness, their uniqueness, and their participation in value systems different from our own.

In order to investigate the individuality of medieval texts and, at the same time, their contributions to archaic or obsolete literary traditions, we must follow the lead of the texts themselves. We must read very slowly, responding with all the perseverance we can muster to their strangeness of form, diction, style, and moral texture. We must also explore in detail their explicit and implied uses of prior books, poetic traditions, and ethical values of which we may, at the start, have only the faintest knowledge. In addition, we must examine the material, manuscript representations of the works we are studying and of the books that influenced them. It is clear that the ways in which authors designed their compositions for the written page, scribes copied them, and audiences (including the poets as readers of other writers) encountered them significantly affected both their form and their meaning. The road we take in such an investigation will not be a straight one. But at the end, if we have been successful, we will have arrived at a genuinely deeper understanding of, and pleasure in, the texts we have explored, both in themselves and in their reciprocal relationships with one or several literary traditions.

While taking into account, then, the limits and strengths of our own subjectivity and the necessary shortcomings of our historical evidence, we

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can, I think, usefully investigate a “tradition” of the *roman antique*. In a manuscript culture in which books were often undated and unsigned by their authors, the kinship of writers and the perceived relationships among books had a strong transhistorical dimension. What is involved in the forms of the *roman antique* across three centuries is not an abstract, theoretical line of filiation, but a narrowly delimited living tradition of canonical and para-canonical “books” and academically based methods of reading and writing that made the specific formal developments I consider possible. I put the word “books” in quotation marks because various medieval conceptions of the Latin book play a key part in the formation of the tradition we are tracing. Our explorations will include not only the books the authors of the *romans antiques* actually read and borrowed from, but also some of the formal ideas they had about their own compositions *as* books.

The academic *collectio* of Latin texts used as a basis for all seven compositions studied in this book calls to mind a familiar image of the medieval author. In one example, which appears at the beginning of an elegant fourteenth-century copy of Dante’s *Commedia*, the author – who is reading in preparation for writing – sits at a desk with several books before him. He is actively examining two volumes at once, a third lies open on a stand to his left, and a fourth rests closed, ready for use.⁹ Just such a situation lies behind the writing of each of the poems I will discuss in succeeding chapters. If we remove Dante the author from the illustration I have just described and replace him, for instance, by Chaucer the author, we can be fairly certain which books were ready to hand on his desk as he composed his *Troilus*: Boccaccio’s *Filostrato*; Benoît de Sainte-Maure’s *Roman de Troie*; Joseph of Exeter’s Latin *Historia de bello troiano*; Statius’ *Thebaid*; Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and his love poems; Boethius’ *De consolazione philosophiae*; some version of the *Roman de Thèbes*; Dante’s *Commedia*. In his poem, Chaucer, like other authors of *romans antiques*, self-consciously develops both a synchronic and a diachronic relationship with the sources from which he draws. In doing so, he plays, in formally and thematically significant ways, with problems of time and history and of literary and moral pastness in relation to his own present.

As I have already implied, in the development of the medieval *roman antique*, the terms “tradition” and “form” are intimately connected. “Tradition” carries with it the sense of an actual physical as well as metaphoric, intellectual handling of particular books as a means of literary transmission, imitation, and transformation. The writers of the seven *romans* explored in this study, like the author depicted in the Dante manuscript, define themselves and their authority by aligning themselves

with other “clerkly” authors, and above all with the great Latin *auctores* who made “les granz livres des set arz.”¹⁰ Each of the poets clearly had before him manuscript copies of Latin books, whose ancient, canonical matter he intended to collate, translate, or pillage for the sake of his particular public’s pleasure and instruction. Even Chaucer, who invents his Latin “Lollius” (while actually using Boccaccio’s vernacular *Filostrato*), also relies on his copies of Ovid, Statius, Seneca, and Boethius, among others, in making both his *Book of Troilus and Criseyde* and his *Knight’s Tale*.

These canonical volumes *as* volumes provided visual as well as conceptual models for vernacular narrative fiction in ways that are, as we shall see, central to the evolving tradition of the *roman antique*.¹¹ Medieval schoolmasters and students, in reading their Latin texts, would have viewed the margins and interlinear spaces in their manuscript books as inviting and even requiring glosses. They would also have taken as a serious part of any classical composition the scribes’ characteristic division of the narrative matter into books, parts, chapters, and/or *periochae*. Such divisions as these were often marked for special attention in the manuscripts (as they are not in modern printed editions) by colored or historiated capitals and even by illustrations. Imitating the medieval scribal presentation of their Latin sources, authors in the tradition of the *roman antique* implicated the visual *schemata* of the learned Latin book more or less fully in their poems as part of their formal design.¹² In their writing, they invited their audiences to regard their vernacular, self-consciously composed texts as participants in the same book culture as their Latin originals.

There is, however, also another, subversive sense of the word “tradition” implicated in the art of all seven poems. In “translating” the canonical *auctores* of the liberal-arts curriculum (who were, by the twelfth century, both ancient and modern), each poet transgresses the original words and *sen* or moral argument of his copy text(s), erasing his Latin sources, so to speak, in remaking them into his own vernacular tongue. In the process of translating, the sources are both transmitted and betrayed. As, by their acts of writing, poets transferred the materials of prior, authorized texts into their own compositions and their own languages, they also transformed them. The books they produced may be designed to *look like* the volumes containing the wisdom of the ancients; but they differ from them in their compositional programs as fundamentally as the court of the Emperor Augustus differed from that of Henry II Plantagenet, or King Robert of Naples’ court from Richard II of England’s.

Certain other matters require comment. I have chosen to call the formal tradition to which the seven poems in this study contribute the “*roman antique*.” This is a modern rather than a medieval label. Benoît de

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Sainte-Maure calls his *Roman de Troie* a “romanz,” a term that emphasizes its essential bond with a prior Latin book. Boccaccio names his *Filostrato* “picciolo libro” and his *Teseida*, “picciolo libretto.” He also implies that his *Teseida* is an epic, while Chaucer calls his *Troilus* a “litel bok” and “litel myn tragedye” and his *Knight’s Tale* simply a “tale.” But the phrase “roman antique,” better than any of the names provided by the medieval poets, emphasizes a formally significant conjunction in all seven poems between a medieval vernacular language and the language and matter of classical history, between modern authorial composition and ancient Latin models for writing. In this regard, “roman antique” is more useful than the broad medieval term *romanz*. It helps to differentiate the verse-compositions considered in this study from other medieval translations of Latin originals by emphasizing the centrality of ancient historical matter and classically based moral wisdom in the evolution of the tradition.¹³

I also want to make it clear that I am not studying the *roman antique* as a first stage in the development of the *roman* or novel. In my view, the *roman antique* is a distinctive literary form that has its own characteristic principles of composition, matter, moral arguments, motivations, and a life (or several successive lives) from the twelfth century until the end of the Middle Ages. In comparing three different generations of the *roman antique*, I reject what I consider a false issue vigorously debated in France, where the same term *roman* is used both for medieval romance and for the post-Renaissance novel. Within the terms of this debate, scholars disagree as to which twelfth-century *romans* deserve to be called the *first* novels – the *romans antiques* or Chrétien de Troyes’ romances.¹⁴ But they generally assume a continuous, unbroken, linear development of the *roman* from the twelfth to the twentieth century. As Robert Marichal puts it, there is not the “least break in continuity” between the twelfth-century *romans antiques* and “le dernier roman écrit dans l’une quelconque des langues indo-européennes sorti des presses en ce mois de juillet 1965.”¹⁵ The search for beginnings is enticing, and the belief in the linear development of forms and genres from one period to another governs not only arguments about the origins of the novel in France, but also classical conceptions of literary tradition in general.

In place of such a position, I would suggest that the *roman antique* belongs to the Middle Ages and, in a modified way, to the Renaissance.¹⁶ As such, it does not have modern analogues. Insofar as we can, we must radically adjust our sensibilities and our expectations if we are to discover what formal ideas, what compositional principles, what specific moral *sen*, each author of a *roman antique* proposed to his original audience. Our interest in a medieval narrative form, however, should not be merely antiquarian. It is

worth our while in a deeper, human sense, to understand (as far as we can) what strategies several later medieval poets developed to assist their courtly audiences in exploring the conditions and moral possibilities of their lives.

The final debate joined in this study concerns the group of poems to be included within the category "roman antique." I have extended the list well beyond its most commonly argued bounds to encompass seven poems written in three different languages, for three different courtly audiences, in the course of two and a half centuries. These seven poems are not the only texts which might be included in an exploration of the *roman antique* as a tradition. I have selected them both because they seem to me fully realized experiments in a formal literary tradition and because they bear a clear historical relationship of interdependence to each other. French scholars have long argued among themselves as to which compositions properly belong to the group, but they have almost always limited themselves to a small number of twelfth-century francophone texts.¹⁷ And they have generally assumed that the form or genre simply gave way, in the course of the twelfth century, to the greater achievements of Chrétien de Troyes and Arthurian romance. I argue, on the contrary, that a distinctive poetic implicitly and explicitly proposed to their public by the mid-twelfth-century *romanciers* was taken up and developed by several later medieval poets, including Boccaccio and Chaucer.¹⁸

The three twelfth-century French *romans antiques*, which stand at the beginning of the tradition I am tracing, were composed within a period of no more than twenty years, and probably less (c. 1150–65 or 1170). Henry II Plantagenet, his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine, and their court, eager to establish their place in the secular (as opposed to religious), classically based history of human civilization, enlisted clerks to invest them with the prestige and moral stature of the ancients. These clerks, well educated in the classical *auctores*, writing in the literary language of the west of France, seem to have formed a sort of *atelier* under the guidance of royal patrons. One result of this interaction between *clergie* and *chevalier* (clerks and the knightly class) was a group of vernacular "chroniques" and "estoires," including Wace's *Brut* and *Roman de Rou*, and Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Chronique des ducs de Normandie*. These vernacular histories, largely driven by a concern for narrative progress, were designed to locate the Plantagenet dynasty within the regular *processus* "de roi en roi et d'oir en oir" extending from ancient Greece to contemporary France and England.¹⁹

Another, very closely related, but formally different kind of narrative, emerging from the same cultural situation, was the *roman antique* – a

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self-consciously poetic, rhetorically complex form of *estoire* intended to serve the interests of the same small, well-defined, elite audience as the chronicles, but in a somewhat different way.²⁰ If one concern of this audience was its own historical significance in relation to the remote and recent past, another was, as Paul Zumthor has observed, the questioning of customary systems of moral value.²¹ Zumthor does no more than mention this interest; yet the *romans antiques* bear key, but infrequently observed testimony to just this concern in a way that the chronicles do not. Like the chronicles, the French *romans antiques* explore the nature and functions of secular history. But their emphases, their compositional aspirations, and their modes of narrative presentation make them significantly different from the chronicles. Capitalizing on the estrangements of ancient history, the authors of the *romans antiques* develop systems of multiple perspective or point of view, which play little or no part in either the chronicles or the *chansons de geste*. Through dramatized monologues and dialogues of several kinds and through multidimensional narrative framing, the French *romanciers* interrogate hypothetical or possible rules for secular ethical conduct. In doing so, they also endorse the prestige of the Latin books from which they “translate” as repositories of useful academic (as opposed to customary) wisdom.²²

The vernacular poets who composed the three twelfth-century romances of antiquity for their small, French-speaking aristocratic audiences present their poems as self-consciously constructed, *written* books like the canonical books of the arts curriculum.²³ They use their narratives to question new (but also ancient, academic) moral systems and, at the same time, to give their listeners the *sola* of *bons dits* and *merveilles*. Most importantly, by turning to ancient history and ancient values, they release themselves – for the sake of intellectual play and ethical inquiry – not only from the traditional, customary ethos of the *chansons de geste* but also from the teleological interests of Christian morality.²⁴

The three French *romans antiques* are designed (though with differing degrees of complexity) to defer the full determination of meaning – to tease their listening public into an intimate relationship with the continuities – and equally the discontinuities – of their “ancient” narratives. The texts are governed by clerkly narrators who claim a special understanding or *sen*. As they guide the search for moral meaning within the narrative matter, their reflexivity invites – even demands – reflection on the part of the audience. The clerkly poets’ hidden, elite *sen* involves a special kind of empowerment – not the empowerment of succession or inheritance (the matter of historiography) but the power derived from a classically based education in the art of noble (moral) conduct. Unlike Wace’s *Brut* or *Roman de Rou*, and

unlike Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Chronique des ducs de Normandie*, the three mid-twelfth-century *romans d'antiquité* use the unfamiliarity of ancient history to draw their courtly audiences gradually, *through* an active involvement in confronting the surprises of the narrative process, into the secrets of a usable moral wisdom. These secrets, in the poets' argument, were first discovered by the ancients and then passed on, often obscurely, to their legitimate successors – the clerks of the medieval schools. As I argue in the first three chapters, the authors of the French *romans antiques* – but particularly Benoît de Sainte-Maure and the *Eneas*-poet – orchestrate their poems as intricate epistemological exercises. They involve their audiences in discovering with as well as beyond the ancient characters what moral values, both private and public, befit noble rulers and their courtiers.

In turning from the French *romans antiques* to Boccaccio's early romances, we leave behind the twelfth-century feudal courts of Henry II for the brilliant ambience of King Robert of Anjou's fourteenth-century court at Naples. The two poems of Boccaccio that concern us in this study – the *Filostrato* and the *Teseida* – reflect the academic, artistic, and cosmopolitan spirit of Robert's court. At the same time, they participate in the courtly, classicizing vernacular tradition initiated by the twelfth-century French *romans antiques*. In a brief but provocative sentence, Vittore Branca asserts the dependence of Boccaccio's early narrative poetry on French romance, including the *romans antiques*. Boccaccio's "prime opere narrative," he says, "sono tessute sulle filigrane del *Floire e Blancheflor*, del *Roman de Troie*, del *Roman de Thèbes*."²⁵ Though he does not develop it, Branca's metaphor of the "watermark" rightly implies Boccaccio's borrowing not only of matter but also of ideas for compositional design from the French poems in constructing his verse-narratives of ancient love and war.

A number of scholars before and after Branca have laid the groundwork for studying these formal connections by their close analyses of the probable "fonti" for the *Filostrato* and *Teseida*.²⁶ They have been chiefly concerned with Boccaccio's borrowing of specific narrative materials, and they have conclusively demonstrated that he actually used material not only from Latin sources but also from the vernacular tradition of the French *romans antiques*. Yet when these same scholars have tried to interpret the Italian poet's apparent divergences from the French tradition, they have tended to look not to literary precedent but rather to Boccaccio's "fantasia" and his autobiographical love life.²⁷ In her valuable study, Maria Gozzi, a student of Branca's, speaking of the *Filostrato*, raises a question shared by other critics. Given the extent of Boccaccio's interventions in making his story of Troilo and Criseida, she asks, can we speak of a "simple modification of the sources"? Answering her own question, she concludes

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that Boccaccio's sources provide only material suggestions which remain extraneous to the poet's acts of imagination in composing. They can, she says, "solamente fornire indicazioni contenutistiche *destinate a rimanere esterne ed estranee alla fantasia del Boccaccio*" (my emphasis).²⁸

Other scholars, likewise aware of Boccaccio's obvious departures from his sources, have gone so far as to deny the possibility of direct affiliations between the French *romans antiques* and Boccaccio's *Filostrato* and *Teseida*.²⁹ Even among those who suspect a formal relationship between the French and Italian poems, no one, as far as I know, has done more than assert a connection. Yet assumptions about form and genre, often inadequately examined, have shaped most interpretations of the Italian poet's early experiments. The *Filostrato* has been labeled an "amoral love fantasy" and a product of the popular *cantare* tradition,³⁰ while the *Teseida* has often been regarded as a "failed epic."³¹ The readings that emerge from these assumptions tend to miss or obscure the dazzling rhetorical play of Boccaccio's compositions as they spring not so much from his imagination or his personal experience as from several literary traditions, prominent among them the formal tradition initiated by the French *romans antiques*. Recognizing the compositional filiation between the *Filostrato*, the *Teseida*, and the twelfth-century *romans antiques* (or their immediate progeny) helps us to discover not only the elegant equilibrium of Boccaccio's poems, but also the precise, academic moral *sen* that he, like his French forebears, implicates in his "ancient" matter.

Recently, it is true, Robert Hollander, Victoria Kirkham, and Janet Levarie Smarr have reoriented reading of the *Filostrato* and the *Teseida* in the direction of moral seriousness and formal coherence.³² And David Anderson has usefully revised the received opinion of the *Teseida* as a failed epic by invoking fourteenth-century ideas of the classical epic.³³ My work complements theirs in regarding Boccaccio's ethical arguments as systematic and coherent. Unlike them, however, I examine the contours of both poems in relation to the French *romans antiques* as well as their likely classical sources. In the two poems, Boccaccio develops what Branca has suggestively called a "cultural bilingualism."³⁴ As I show in detail in the fourth and fifth chapters, Boccaccio uses French and Italian vernacular literary forms to develop his fictions. At the same time, he, like his French forebears, draws heavily on the learned Latin tradition of the schools not only for narrative materials but also for the moral foundations of his poetic compositions.

Chaucer's *Book of Troilus and Criseyde* and his *Knight's Tale* – both of them translations from Boccaccio – have, like the Italian poems, elicited considerable formal and generic speculation, and they too have suffered

from vague or inaccurate labeling. In a recent essay on "romance" in the *Canterbury Tales*, John Burrow epitomizes the problem critics have had with the *Knight's Tale* when they have considered it under the imprecise rubric "romance." The *Tale* is, he says, "a complex and many-sided work, which cannot without discomfort be described simply as a romance."³⁵ Burrow then goes on to notice features in the *Knight's Tale* that stem directly, though he does not recognize it, from the continental tradition of the *roman antique*, including its political and moral interests.³⁶ Once we place the *Knight's Tale* within its proper tradition, we can discover with considerable precision what Chaucer has borrowed from his predecessors and also what he has added in making his own formal and ethical argument.

Troilus and Criseyde, probably written at about the same time as the *Knight's Tale*, has posed even more difficulty for scholars in terms of its form and meaning. Because the poet (through his narrator) actually calls his poem a "litel bok" and a "tragedye," critics have often sought to explore those generic categories, but particularly the latter.³⁷ In doing this, they have not been false to the poem in certain of its aspects; but they have, in different ways, neglected its formal and thematic richness as a multifaceted response to the continental vernacular tradition of the *roman antique*. Indeed, in *Troilus*, Chaucer constructs several "versions" of the *roman antique* as both his principal pagan characters and his Christian narrator attempt to give adequate form to the (shifting) matter of Troy.

I am not the first to link the *Knight's Tale* and *Troilus* with the tradition of the *roman antique*. In his valuable book on Chaucer and pagan antiquity, Alastair Minnis says of both poems that they "belong, at bottom, to a particular species of the genus of romance, the *roman d'antiquité*."³⁸ He also suggests that "they bear comparison with . . . the *Roman de Thèbes*, . . . the *Roman d'Eneas* . . . , and Benoît de St-Maure's *Roman de Troie*." But he does not pursue this comparison except to observe, quoting T.G. Hahn, that Chaucer, like his French forebears, depicts his noble pagans "in a natural environment . . . doing the best they knew, and occasionally exceeding the virtue and moral excellence of Christians."³⁹ Nor does Minnis mention Boccaccio's *Filostrato* and *Teseida* as important formal intermediaries in transmitting the tradition of the *roman antique* to Chaucer. Though both the *Knight's Tale* and the *Book of Troilus* represent surprising new directions within the tradition, they also reflect in different ways Chaucer's deeply original interpretation of a distinctive literary form.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to speak in definitive terms about "medieval romance" as a genre. For one thing, we cannot talk of a genre of romance except in the most general, abstract, and critically misleading terms.⁴⁰ Not

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only would the list of features describing one group of romance-narratives – the *romans antiques*, say, as opposed to the fictions of Chrétien de Troyes or the Vulgate Cycle of Arthurian romance – differ from the lists describing others; it is also doubtful whether any single set of formal and material characteristics could help us to distinguish romance as a genre from all other later-medieval types of narrative.⁴¹ But if no general definition can be of more than superficial value for critical practice, we can, I think, usefully examine delimited groups of vernacular narratives in terms of their historico-formal relationships. In this way, we can begin to distinguish several different forms of medieval romance, each of which will have its own tradition, life-span, anticipated audience, purposes, and principles of composition.⁴² In this sort of study it is not the source relationships between one text and another *per se* that will concern us, but rather the compositional practices of each poet in the group in relation to the others.

The process of reading individual poems in order to distinguish formal traditions necessarily involves us in the hermeneutic circle.⁴³ The judgment as to whether a given text can be said to participate in an immanent poetics or contribute to a specific formal tradition must be a pragmatic one.⁴⁴ By identifying discrete traditions, are we in a better position to illuminate this or that individual text in the group? Are we better able to discover in it what we might not otherwise have noticed? And, by the same token, does the supposition of a tradition or of related formal practices allow us to draw out in valuable ways the compositional similarities or calculated differences that unite several works in a single, formally distinctive cohort? The practices we infer are, by their nature, instrumental rather than essential. Yet by identifying them and exploring their precise poetic and ethical functions in individual poems, we can, I think, substantially enrich our understanding of literary “families” within the large, protean field of medieval romance.⁴⁵

Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie* and the compositional practices of the *roman antique*

Any discussion of the French *romans antiques* owes a great debt to previous scholars. From them we have learned to identify shared features in the *Roman de Thèbes*, the *Roman de Troie*, and the *Roman d'Eneas*.¹ We expect to find classical historical matter translated from Latin into *romanz*, characters of high birth, an Ovidian love interest, and a delight in *merveilles* and *mirabilia*. We also anticipate a thematic interplay between *amor* and *militia* and a verse-form suited to discourse rather than chanting. In addition, we look for a concern with academic *saveir* or *science*. We know too that the authors of the twelfth-century *romans antiques* designed their poems (and their lessons on secular moral conduct) for small, aristocratic, listening audiences, and we expect that the audience's anticipated roles will be explicitly written into the text.

But to make such a list of characteristics does not fully explain either the poetics of the French *romans antiques* or their attraction for some of the Middle Ages' greatest writers. In this chapter I examine Benoît de Sainte-Maure's conception of his *Roman de Troie* as a *livre*, his self-dramatization as an *auctor*, and some of his most important compositional principles. *Troie* is a poem in which, as Edmond Faral observed long ago, the twelfth-century *roman antique* achieved its "plus grand épanouissement."² Benoît almost certainly borrowed techniques and ideas about form and matter from his immediate predecessors – the anonymous authors of the *Roman de Thèbes* and the *Roman d'Eneas* – and we shall turn to their contributions in the next two chapters. Yet, of the three French poems most commonly labeled *romans antiques*, *Troie* offers the richest field for subsequent poetic development. The first part of this chapter concerns Benoît's ideas about his poem as a *livre* and about himself as an author. The second part explores *Troie*'s technical dynamics, the ways in which the poet enlivens and dramatizes his narrative materials by means of a system of multiple perspectives or points of view brought to focus on his ancient matter.

In the Latin commentary tradition belonging to the medieval liberal-arts curriculum, it is not uncommon to find several different interpretations framing a single passage. Often two or more complementary (or contradictory) readings explain a whole text. Sometimes the multiple glosses are contemporary with each other; at other times, they belong to different decades or centuries. Benoît turns the possibilities for multiple interpretation – inert on the manuscript page in the commentary tradition – into a powerful aspect of his poetics. Using both his characters and his own narratorial argument to project interpretations of his matter, he involves his audience in complex judgments about situational ethics. The perspectives his narrating “I” and his ancient protagonists offer are not always mutually exclusive, though they sometimes are. Their intricate interplay brings life and force to the classical matter even as it steadily requires challenging moral assessment by the audience.

Both Benoît's presentation of himself and his *livre* and his system of multiple perspectives in *Troie* participate centrally in the “configuration,” as Tzvetan Todorov puts it, “of literary properties,” the “inventory of options” that entered, mainly through Benoît, into the making of a literary tradition.³ Like the poet's explicit presentation of himself and his book, the dynamic interplay of voices that shapes his poem's argument indicates a new direction in vernacular narrative composition. It is true that the *romans antiques* share many of their interests with the *chansons de geste* as well as the *estoires* and chronicles of the same period. Indeed, medieval scribes in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries tended to describe the three twelfth-century romances of antiquity as histories, useful to audiences because they contained “les moralitez.”⁴ But to regard them as continuous with contemporary histories and chronicles is to miss their distinctive formal character – their innovative narrative techniques, their systems of multiple perspective, their academically based moral questioning (chapter 2), and the novelty of their medievalized Ovidian poetics of secular love (chapter 3).

THE POET AND THE LIVRE

In his long prologue to the *Roman de Troie*, Benoît de Sainte-Maure gives us a remarkable portrait of a twelfth-century writer *en roman* at work.⁵ We can observe the poet in his study, so to speak, brilliantly, daringly engaging both the canonical texts of the liberal-arts curriculum and the inherited vernacular literary traditions to serve his composition. As Robert Marichal has argued, “La naissance du roman [and specifically the *roman antique*] implique donc simultanément la naissance de l'écrivain comme celle de son

lecteur.”⁶ Above all, the poet of *Troie* overtly identifies himself and his text in relation to the ancient *auctores* and their Latin books. The very noun *romanz* (from the Latin *romanicus/romanice*), together with Benoît’s prologal phrase, “metre *en romanz*,” bespeaks an essential connection between the poem’s vernacular tongue and the Latin of its avowed source.⁷ Yet, as Benoît himself indicates, his poem also assumes the status of a *livre* in its own right.⁸ In his prologue, when the French poet deftly moves from the “granz livres des set arz” to his own *livre*, he does not acknowledge any transgression of the Latin books’ boundaries. “Nule autre rien n’i voudrai metre,” he declares, “S’ensi non com jol truis escrit” (I would not like to put down anything except as I find it written) (140–41).⁹ But then he slyly adds, “ne di mie qu’aucun bon dit/ N’i mete, se faire le sai” (I don’t say at all that I won’t include some fine discourse if I know how to do it) (142–43). In fact, it is precisely the poet’s “bon dit,” including his artistic play with received authorial roles, literary forms, narrative materials, and readerly expectations, that gives his *roman antique* its particular character.¹⁰

Troie’s prologue as a medieval accessus ad auctorem

Benoît’s presentation of himself as a writer and of his poem as a book conforms, in the first place, to ideas promulgated by other twelfth-century writers of secular narrative poetry *en romanz*.¹¹ Like Alberic of Pisançon and the *Thèbes*-poet before him, he argues for notions of the *auctor* and the *livre* that were familiar enough in the classroom, but had not generally affected the shape of poetic narrative in the earlier Middle Ages. If medieval schoolmasters present the great *auctores* of the arts curriculum as teachers of rhetoric and “instructores bonorum morum . . . malorum extirpatores,” so too twelfth-century clerkly romancers describe themselves in their prologues.¹² Furthermore, imitating the medieval conception of their canonical forebears, they promise to produce works which can be analyzed in grammar-school terms – books self-consciously designed to reveal a moral “intentio scribendi” through the skillful disposition of received “ancient” *matière*.¹³

In the paradigm for the authoritative, composed *liber* invariably proposed by the schoolroom *accessus ad auctores*, poets were expected to organize their chosen *materia* in view of a moral *intentio*. Their governing concern was to be a *causa finalis*, which would include a *utilitas* for the reader. To this end, writers were to dispose their materials by means of their *modus tractandi*, organizing the material in order to inform their work with a moral intention and thereby reveal philosophical wisdom or *sen*.¹⁴ Benoît clearly implicates his poem in this schematic idea of the classical

book when he introduces himself, his matter, and his intention in the prologue to his *romanz*.

Troie's materia is the truth about the fall of Troy – “com Troie fu perie” (43) – and Benoît proposes to follow Dares rather than Homer in detailing “la verité” of the destruction because the latter was not an eye-witness to the events. The poem’s *intentio*, however, is not only historical truth but moral instruction. Near the beginning of his prologue, Benoît celebrates the great classical *auctores* as teachers of the kind of civilized, *human* behavior that allows one to avoid folly. If the ancient grammarians and philosophers had been silent, he says:

Vesquist li siegles folement:
Com bestes eüssons vie;
Que fust saveirs ne que folie
Ne seüssons sol esguarder,
Ne l’un de l’autre desevrer. (12–16)

(The world would have lived in folly. As beasts we would have fared. We would not have known how to distinguish wisdom and folly, nor would we have known how to separate one from the other.)

Identifying himself with the *auctores*, Benoît explains how he and his audience will benefit from the *science* he is about to share: “De bien ne puet nus trop oïr/ Ne trop savoir ne retenir;/ Ne nus ne se deit atargier/ De bien faire ne d’enseignier” (One cannot hear too much good, nor know nor retain too much. Nor ought one to delay to do well or to teach) (27–30). By discovering the moral instruction he will give in and through the ancient history, Benoît implies, his audience will be able to use his poem to direct their own lives. They themselves will be empowered to distinguish *savoir* from *folie* and thereby participate in furthering the course of human civilization.

Benoît also makes his *modus tractandi* clear within the terms of the *accessus* tradition, not only in the prologue to *Troie* but at several points in the narrative. The poet will “follow the letter” of his Latin source (138–41), and he will add neither more nor less than the history requires. As he says following his poem’s first long segment:

Jo l’en dirai la verité
E retrairai trestote l’uevre,
Si com li Autors la descuevre. (2076–78)

(I will tell the truth of it and absolutely all of the work just as the Author reveals it.)

In being faithful to the curve of the whole history, Benoît gives priority to the historicity of his narrative, organizing his matter to trace the beginning, middle, and end of the Trojan War. But, as we shall see later on, he is at least

Chaucer and the *roman antique*

equally concerned with issues of poetic composition and moral instruction as shaping principles for his work.

In the subsequent tradition of the *roman antique*, no writer will fail to identify his poem, as Benoît and his immediate predecessors had, in relation to this highly structured late-antique and medieval notion of the classical *liber*. Though Boccaccio and Chaucer both manipulate the French poets' formal conception of their texts as "composed" books for their own purposes, they use the academic formulations of the French *romanciers*, drawn from the *accessus* tradition, as their point of departure. Every prologue in the tradition, including Boccaccio's prologal epistles, is designed to be analyzed in grammar-school terms.

Benoît's livre and the commentary tradition

Another aspect of the learned *liber* that clearly affected the form of the *roman antique* is the one Eugene Vinaver, speaking of Arthurian romance, suggested some time ago. Pointing to medieval academic habits of exegesis, Vinaver argued that these schoolroom practices of explication "could easily become a habit of conception" in the making of romance.¹⁵ As everyone knows, the major classical works studied in the medieval classroom were typically framed in school manuscripts by marginal and interlinear glosses. These comments provided guides – secondary texts, as it were – by which to interpret word meanings, fill in mythological stories or geographical allusions, identify rhetorical figures, understand the causes for events described, or recognize the *auctor* or poet's moral intention. The writers of the early *romans antiques* not only drew materials from medieval glosses of this kind into their own poems, halting the narrative process to provide clarification of various kinds; they also perceived their works as "texts" incorporating *matière* and commentary.¹⁶ The relationship between narrative and moralizing commentary differs from poem to poem within the tradition of the *roman antique*. But every writer in the tradition draws learned explanatory and moral instruction from the margins of medieval manuscripts of the classical *auctores* into his composition as an essential feature of its form. And Boccaccio actually frames his *Teseida* with his own learned commentary.

Troie and the libri manuales of the schools

Another model for his *livre*, as Benoît presents it in the prologue to his *Roman de Troie*, is the *liber manualis* or handbook frequently designed to serve as a textbook in the medieval grammar schools.¹⁷ Let us listen to the

poet once again, this time as he presents himself, his *auctor*, Dares, and the form of his book in the prologue to *Troie* in relation to the whole *collectio* of Latin books used in the arts curriculum. He begins by inviting his audience to consider the authors he has studied – Solomon and “. . . cil qui troverent les parz/ E les granz livres des set arz, / Des philosophes les traitiez” (those who found the parts [i.e., the grammarians] and the great books of the seven [liberal] arts . . . the treatises of the philosophers) (1; 7–9). By means of this imposing group, Benoît then relegates Dares, his principal source, to a secondary position, making him part of the whole *bella scola* of the grammar-school *auctores*.

The poet's invocation of the *auctores*' wisdom is a commonplace, part of the stock-in-trade of the twelfth-century vernacular poets aiming to separate themselves from mere minstrels and tellers of occasional tales. Yet the *way* in which Benoît conceives the *auctores*, as a company, has certain specific implications for the shape of his *roman* as a *livre*.¹⁸ As, in his prologue, he joins his Dares with the other philosophers who made “les livres des set arz,” he seems to have in mind the *De excidio*'s frequent appearance in textbook compilations.¹⁹ He also implies that his *roman* will aspire to an encyclopedic wisdom paralleling that of the typical school handbook. His own writing, considered as a *liber*, is to be a repository for many kinds of knowledge, which will be conveyed, as is often the case in manuscript compilations, through several rhetorical forms and in many voices, whether through dramatized speeches, stories, or commentary.

In his narration, Benoît freely interweaves matter from several curricular texts as well as literary forms drawn from classical and vernacular poetry into his poetic and moral argument. He draws heavily on Ovid, using the *Heroides* as well as the *Metamorphoses* to augment his Dares and Dictys and develop his own arguments (a subject to be dealt with in chapter 3). As we shall see in chapter 2, he also borrows the form of the political *plait* from the *chansons de geste* for his court councils and he adapts the structure of the academic *quaestio* and the literary debate to the demands of Ovidian love in the bedroom. In calling his own poem a *livre*, Benoît appears to have had something like Conrad of Hirsau's definition of the *liber* as *contextus* in mind. A *liber*, Conrad says, is a “collection or linking [literally, ‘interweaving’] of speeches, stories, commentaries or similar [matter] in one body.”²⁰ By no mere coincidence, I think, Benoît's *Troie* is composed as a comparable *collectio* of speeches, stories, and commentaries. His poem, like later compositions in the tradition of the *roman antique*, aims for a philosophical comprehensiveness based on the collective moral wisdom and scientific knowledge of the ancients.

In addition to weaving various classical and vernacular materials into a

single *collectio*, Benoît also draws bookish information into the compass of his poem, partly to suggest the encyclopedic scope of his text. After the twenty-first battle of the war, for example, he provides a long description of the world, “si com la Letre dit e sone” (just as the Latin says and articulates) (2313off.). It is as if, for the moment, Benoît has turned from Dares to a work of geography. He yearns, so he tells his audience, to give a full description of the whole world, though he does not have time. But he imagines the dimensions of such an undertaking (23205–12). Then, despite his concern for time and his fear of unnecessary digression, Benoît devotes 175 verses to describing the world. He also gives an account of the legendary Amazons and their sex lives on the basis of his sources, “li Traitié/ E li grant Livre Historial” (the treatises and the great history books) (23302–3). More than digressive, gratuitous information, this long interlude provides one of the several outer framing perspectives in the poem through which we may view Troy’s calamitous fall. This particular scholarly, geographical frame encourages the kind of large, detached perspective not fully available within the walls of Troy or in the camps of the pagan soldiers, but proper to the textbooks and the *auctores* of the arts curriculum.

Furthermore, Benoît introduces themes into his poem which were particularly associated with twelfth-century school handbooks and the philosophical wisdom of the arts curriculum. One of these – the theme of *contemptus mundi* – was in the process of becoming a central organizing principle of school anthologies during the course of the twelfth century.²¹ Poised at a great distance from the events themselves, in his scholarly, “philosophical” voice, the poet will show as well as tell how “la riche chevalerie/ Que a cel tens ert fu perie/ E destruite la grant cité” (the powerful knightly class, which existed at the time, perished, and the city was destroyed) (2073–75). Benoît returns regularly to this elegiac and moral note in the course of his narrative. It is a “philosophical” mooring, as it were, for all the detailed, circumstantial events that call attention to themselves in the poem’s densely detailed episodes.

Closely tied to the subject of worldly contempt in twelfth-century school books and in Benoît’s poem is the academic theme of Fortune as the agent of *destinee*. The image of *Fortuna* as two-faced, as turning her wheel remorselessly, infiltrates the narrative in a systematic way. The Trojan king, Priam, for example, pressed to recognize his sad plight, describes himself flung from the top to the bottom of Fortune’s wheel:

Haïl Fortune dolorose,
Come estes pesme e tenebrose!
Tant me fustes ja liee e bele,

Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie*

Sor le plus haut de la roële
M'aseïstes e me posastes;
Mais, puis que vos reporpensastes,
Trop laidement, senz demorer,
Me ravez fait jus devaler,
Qu'el plus bas sui desoz voz piez,
Povre, vis e desconseilliez,
Senz espeir e senz atendance
D'avoir mais joie n'alejance,
Senz resordre, senz redrecier. (25215-27)

(Alas! sorrowful Fortune, how terrible and dark you are! you were so joyful and beautiful to me; you set and placed me at the top of the wheel. But when you had reconsidered, you at once made me fall down very shamefully so that I was at the lowest point beneath your feet, poor, vile, disconsolate, without hope and without trust of ever having joy or respite, without rising up again.)

Alternative causes, adduced by the narrator and by pagan characters in the poem, offer different explanations for the Trojans' downfall – pride, folly, destiny, treachery – and these greatly complicate the issue of fortune, though they do not entirely displace it.

Again, when Benoît describes Briseida's changeableness as she leaves Troilus for Diomedes, the image of *Fortuna* merges with hers:

A femme dure dueus petit:
A l'un uel plore, a l'autre rit.
Mout muënt tost li lor corage.
Assez est fole la plus sage:
Quan qu'ele a en set anz amé
A ele en treis jorz oblié. (13441-46)

(In a woman sorrow lasts a short [time]; with one eye she weeps, with the other she smiles. Her heart changes very quickly; the wisest is entirely foolish: whatever she has loved for seven years, it is forgotten by her in three days.)

In this case, Benoît brings the well-known figure of Lady Fortune smiling with one eye, crying with the other, together with conventional clerical antifeminist attitudes towards all women as changeable.²² This is by no means Benoît's only image of Briseida. In other voices, from other perspectives, he admires her beauty, pauses over her elegant attire, sympathizes with her sorrow at leaving her lover, condemns the Greeks for separating her from Troilus. Yet, as he ties her to Fortune, Benoît draws away from the circumstantial narrative to his poem's outer frame, reminding us of one of his (and the *libri manuales*) overriding themes – the power of Fortune and change to undermine all earthly moments of happiness.

BENOÎT'S IMAGES OF HIMSELF AS AUTHOR

A question arises at this point as to Benoît's conception of himself as an author and his poem as a book. Would the French clerk locate himself in the category of writers recently identified by Alastair Minnis as *compilatores*?²³ Certainly at many points in his narrative, Benoît reveals a sense of humility and even servility in the face of his authoritative Latin sources. He also collates materials or "flowers" from various classical and late-antique authors for the sake of his large philosophical agenda or *intentio*. In fact, however, Benoît seems to have developed his own distinctive authorial image specifically in relation to his principal *auctor* Dares and to Cornelius Nepos, the first "translator" of the *De excidio Troiae*. He also defines himself at the end of his prologue in terms of Horatian and medieval rhetorical notions of the poet as a composer. Benoît's explicitly articulated authorial images as both translator and artist are decisive in determining the form of his poem not as a compilation or even a history *per se* but as a poetic composition strictly speaking. To be sure, his specifically artistic concerns vie with his historical and moral interests in *Troie*. Yet they represent an essential first stage in the development of the *roman antique* as verse-narrative orchestrated by an individual and individuated composer. Nearly two hundred years later, with a proto-Renaissance attention to authorial self-fashioning, Boccaccio was to develop the tradition much more fully in the direction of poetic *fiction*. And Chaucer would respond both to Benoît and to Boccaccio as he formed his subtle, chameleon-like self-presentations in *Troilus* and the *Knight's Tale*.

The poet as translator

Benoît's copy of Dares' *De excidio Troiae* almost certainly began with some version of a prologal letter by Cornelius Nepos, the self-styled "translator" of the *De excidio*. Cornelius' letter typically functions in medieval manuscripts as an *accessus* to Dares' *De excidio*, serving the purpose usually filled by the schoolmasters' pedantic, formulaic introductions to the *auctores*. In the letter, Cornelius, by his own estimation a precise and modest scholar, offers his "exact" translation of Dares in order to provide Latin-speaking readers with the truth about far-off Greek history, a history *misreported* by Homer. Busily studying in Athens, he says, he had found Dares' true (as opposed to Homer's false) history and had undertaken to translate it from Greek into Latin, omitting nothing. "Following the straightforward and simple style of the Greek original," he declares, "I translated word for word."²⁴

When Benoît presents himself in *his* prologue (an *accessus* in its own right) as translator, reader, and scholarly scribe, he clearly forms his self-image in part on the model of Cornelius. Just as Cornelius – like him, “de letres sages e fondez” (wise and well grounded in literary texts) (84) – came upon a Greek manuscript of Dares in a cupboard, so Benoît “finds” the Latin version, not “usee,/ N'en guaires lieus nen . . . trovee” (very little quoted, found scarcely anywhere) (129–30). What Benoît recognizes in Cornelius' discovery is no less than a learned act of rhetorical “finding” or invention.²⁵ By chance, but also because he is in the habit of searching old books for new information, Cornelius finds a Greek manuscript of Dares. Furthermore, his learning allows him to understand its importance. At the moment of discovery he alone has access to the true history of Troy. His authority derives not from community approval but from unique knowledge, scholarly habits of reading, literary cleverness, and special understanding. The figure of Cornelius as scholarly investigator gives Benoît a model for his own act of “finding” and for his “translation.” Like Cornelius, he can assume a scholarly distance from his matter when he chooses. He can also practice a certain academic passivity towards his matter. He will be a faithful copyist, yielding to the “truth” of his source even when his *auctor* records unsavory or incredible or sensational matters.

Benoît's first image of himself in the narrative of *Troie* proper is as a reader, reenacting Cornelius' prior enterprise, poring over his Dares, questioning the facts before him. He begins his story as Dares does, with Pelias rex (who becomes “Peleüs . . . riches reis” *en roman*ζ).²⁶ But when the poet comes to Pelias' brother, Aeson, he finds no mention in Dares of his rank, and he reports the lacuna:

Ne sai s'ert reis o cuens o dus,
Quar li Livres ne m'en dit plus. (725–26)

(I do not know if he was a king or a count or a duke, for the book tells me no more of it.)

While we as readers join Benoît in observing Dares' lapse, his questioning invites ours. This initial act of questioning is a very minor one. But such absences of information accumulate over the course of the narrative. They introduce an element of mystery, of incompleteness concerning the distant classical *estoire*, and they draw us as the audience into a complex relationship with the translator, his own vernacular poem, and his Latin source. It is as if we were being asked to study a palimpsest, poring over one text and at the same time holding in balance the shadowy notations of another. Moreover, the image of the author as reader projected by Benoît calls attention to the fact that we are responding to words rather than “reality.” And these words may or may not fully express or clarify the actual history for which

they stand. Benoît, in his role as translator, following the tracings of Cornelius, puts us at a distance from the "truth," thereby inviting us to consider, rather than celebrating, the veracity of his narrative.

The poet as composer

If Benoît the "translator" follows faithfully *after* his *matière*, Benoît the composer claims to organize and control it. The poet's final image of himself in the prologue to *Troie* is as a maker strictly speaking. This image, which epitomizes the *way* in which he has interwoven the materials he has *contruvé*, does not finally coincide well or simply with medieval ideas of the compiler. Nor does it passively reiterate the image either Cornelius or Dares projects for himself in the *De excidio Troiae* as translator and chronicler respectively. At the very end of his prologue, Benoît insists on his role as a composer, and he also names himself (lines 132-44). Such naming, unusual for vernacular writers in the earlier Middle Ages, but essential in the school tradition of the great *auctores* and the medieval *accessus*, emphasizes the poet's uniqueness as well as his importance for future generations. As an artist, Benoît turns not to Dares but to another school text, one that empowers him to imitate the *poetic*, artfully composed books of certain of the great classical authors. In the final movement of his prologue, he embraces a Horatian image of himself, and he speaks a Horatian theory of composition:

... Beneiez de Sainte More
L'a contruvé e fait e dit
E o sa main les moz escrit,
Ensi tailliez, ensi curez,
Ensi asis, ensi posez,
Que plus ne meins n'i a mestier. (132-37)

(Benoît de Sainte-Maure has invented and arranged it and put it into verse, and written the words with his hand: so cut to size, so polished, so set down and put in place, that there is no need for more or less.)

In this passage, Benoît compresses Horace's central lessons about due proportion among the parts of a poem into a few verses. At the same time he expands a slight Horatian suggestion into a dominant metaphoric image of himself as a poet. In a single line of the *Ars poetica* Horace had advised poets to examine the joints between parts of their poems in the way a mason does, by running a fingernail along the joints in his stonework to feel any roughness or gap.²⁷ Benoît extends this advice to describe his whole art: "o sa main" he will cut, polish, and set the parts of his narrative, as if they were blocks of stone, in their proper places.

As *Troie*'s formal lineaments attest, Benoît's description of himself as a composer is not merely a nod to classical norms. Later in this chapter we shall see that his poem proceeds as a series of carefully wrought, intricately shaped episodes. Each episode constitutes a microcosm of the whole, carefully joined to the next by overt authorial management. The effect is of a series of carefully framed, closely related compartments not altogether unlike those to be found in twelfth-century religious panel paintings. The metaphor of the stonemason Benoît implicates in his prologue as he describes how he has arranged his matter not only points us suggestively to Horace; it also incorporates ideas about rhetorical composition current in medieval theory and in schoolroom discussions of classical poetry.

Form and matter in the poet's composition: the example of Hector's sarcophagus

Students of medieval romance are thoroughly familiar with Chrétien de Troyes' discussions of *matière*, *sen*, and *conjointure*. But no one, as far as I know, has examined Benoît's views about "composed" art in *Troie*. To clarify his practice, I want to look closely at a description of artistic activity in *Troie* that parallels and illuminates the French clerk's concluding image of himself in his prologue. Taken alone, this passage may not appear to be remarkable except as an example of Benoît's interest in *merveilles*. Yet it provides materials for a useful analogical meditation on the dynamic relationship, as Benoît seems to have perceived it, between raw materials and artistic as well as moral form in the making of a poetic composition. Most importantly, the passage includes verbs that describe the "shaping" or "fashioning" activities involved in configuring raw materials – verbs Benoît also uses to describe his own compositional activities.

In the passage to which I refer, the artistic object is a sarcophagus made by "trei sage engeigneur" to dignify Hector's remains after he has been killed in battle:

... S'ont un sarcueil dedenz asis,
Et si n'est hom ne nez ne vis
Qui de si riche oist parler.
Quar pierres orent fait tribler,
Esmeraudes, alemandines,
Saphirs, topaces e sadines:
En or d'Araibe sont fondues
Et trestotes a un venues.
Li trei sage devin ont fait
Un molle entaillie e portrait

Chaucer and the *roman antique*

De la plus riche uevre qui fust
Ne que nus hom veoir poust.
L'or e les pierres i geterent,
D'estrange chose s'apenserent:
N'i bosoigna ne plus ne meins,
Que toz li molles en fu pleins. (16721-36)

(They had a sarcophagus placed inside [the temple] and there was no one living who would have heard tell of anything so expensive. For they had stones crushed – emeralds, rubies, sapphires, topazes, and agates. They are amalgamated with gold of Arabia and they have all become one [material]. The three wise prophets have had a mold carved and detailed, constituting the most expensive work that was or that anyone could ever see. They poured the gold and the precious stones into it. They had conceived of a strange thing. There was no need of more or less, for the whole mold was filled with it [i.e., the mixture of gold and crushed stone].)

In this extraordinary description, a variety of raw materials – several different kinds of jewels and Arabian gold – are worked on, fused, and then given shape within a richly carved (“*entaillie*”) form or mold. The materials themselves are, to some extent, transformed in the process, changed by amalgamation into a single, strange, sparkling new medium for the sake of filling the elaborately designed form. The poet can still discern the raw ingredients in the transformed matter, but he also observes how the newly incorporated materials participate in the coherence and beauty of the finished work. The *engeigneor* (literally, those who have exercised *engin* in their art of invention) have made exactly the right amount of material to fill their (literal) mold. The resulting sarcophagus, moreover, precisely suits the designers’ high moral intention: to honor the dead Hector. In the richness of its materials, contained by its intricate shape, it fittingly celebrates the memory of Troy’s hero.

When we set this description of Hector’s sarcophagus besides Benoît’s specifically literary enterprise in *Troie*, we find a parallel sense of “fashioning” and artificial form in relation to matter. In discussing and shaping his *roman*, he reveals his interest in the interplay between the *matière* and the form of the *livre*. Near the end of his prologue to *Troie*, he indicates that his book will exactly encompass the matter he has taken up. He has arranged his materials with such care, he says, “Que plus ne meins n’i a mestier” (137). He is referring here to the all-important principle of *oeconomia* or *convenientia* preached at the beginning of Horace’s *Ars poetica*. As Horace advises, the poet is to harmonize and unify his chosen matter by means of due proportion. Moreover, like the three wise *engeigneor* who make a strange new material from crushed jewels and gold, Benoît finds his literary *matière* for *Troie* in several different sources. He then interweaves his materials so that the boundaries between borrowed texts cannot easily

be discerned. In his process of "translation," he amalgamates all of his borrowed and invented matter finally to fit his carefully devised form, which, he promises in his prologue, will be well "tailliez," "curez," "asis," and "posez."

In medieval academic discussions of *materia*, matter is generally perceived as raw material upon which the artist will act in order to impose a design or form. As Conrad of Hirsau puts it in his twelfth-century *Dialogus super auctores*:

Materia est unde constat quodlibet, unde et vocabulum trahit quasi mater rei. Duobus autem modis dicitur materia, ut, sicut in edificio sunt ligna et lapides, sicut in vocibus genus et species et cetera quibus opus perficitur quod auctor agendum aggredditur.²⁸

(The *materia* is that from whence anything stands, exists, whence the name refers as if to the mother of the thing. *Materia* is spoken of in two modes, so that just as in a building there are wood and stones, so in discourse there are genus and species and other things by which the work, which the author sets in motion, is brought to completion.)

Often in modern critical discussions, scholars have translated the medieval romancers' term, *matière*, simply as "subject matter."²⁹ Yet Conrad's comparison of the writer's matter to wood and stone as well as his fanciful play on *materia/mater rei* would suggest a deeper, generative conception.³⁰ The thing (the artful composition) is generated by the artist's deep understanding of the nature of the materials he or she has chosen, the "mother of the thing." The formal design, then, must be responsive to the very essence of the matter. Writers must grasp the fundamental character of whatever materials they have chosen before they can "translate" them into their own artistic and moral designs. As Benoît's prologue suggests and his poem attests, one of the key elements distinguishing his *roman antique* from compilations as well as histories and chronicles is his self-conscious manipulation of *matière* in relation to a carefully calculated poetic form for the sake of a moral *intentio*. It is the writer's responsibility to create or "taillier" (carve out/craft) a form exactly suited to the nature of the matter selected.

I emphasize Benoît's explicit and implicit views about poetry (and art) because these attitudes affected the character of his *roman antique*. Even more than his choice of classical and pseudo-classical matter, Benoît's self-conscious, intricate disposition of his received materials distinguishes his poem from contemporary *chansons de geste* as well as *estoires* like Wace's *Brut* or his own *Chronique des ducs de Normandie*. Chrétien de Troyes is usually credited with elaborating and popularizing a theory of *matière*, *sen*, and *conjointure* in relation to medieval romance. But Benoît had already made a comparable theory of poetic composition central to the formal

conception of his *roman antique*. What Benoît bequeathed to Boccaccio and Chaucer was not only the matter of Troy but also the responsibility of understanding and disposing the materials – finding and “carving out” an adequate artistic form responsive both to the essence of their chosen *materia* and to their intended moral *sen*.

OUTER AND INNER PERSPECTIVES IN THE *ROMAN DE TROIE*

In unfolding his story of Troy, Benoît organizes his *matière* principally through his narrating “I,” who regularly provides shaping perspectives on the process of Troy’s tragic fall.³¹ Certain of these narratorial perspectives serve to distance us in various ways from the poetic matter and to bring our responses into conformity with moral lessons central to the medieval arts curriculum. In describing Benoît’s distancing techniques, I am thinking of the word “perspective” in its pre-Renaissance sense of *perspicere*, that is, “to see clearly.” In medieval painting, the artist “sees” his subject “clearly” from an intellectual, omniscient, and atemporal point of view. Scenes, often arranged as episodic sequences, are to be taken in one by one, and then all together, not as they *appear* but as they *mean*. Hierarchical arrangements of figures, symbolic objects, architectural frames, even bandorlas containing verbal explanations, teach the large lessons of individual scenes and narrative sequences. Backgrounds are flat, and settings play an insignificant, decorative part, if they are used at all.

In his *Roman de Troie*, Benoît systematically marks out segments of his long narrative with a comparable kind of distanced intellectual framing or clarifying focus of narration. His narrator will habitually leave his observation post in the midst of the action in order to retreat to his moral or scribal or formal perspective. A dramatic action, closely rendered, will vanish before our eyes in favor of retreat to the narrative frame of the “book” or philosophical wisdom or historical truth: “N’en dirai plus, ne nel vueil faire,/ Quar mout ai grant uevre a retraire” (I will not say any more, nor do I wish to do it, because I have a great work to expose) (2043–44). Or, “Jo ne le truis pas en cest livre,/ Ne Daires plus n’en voust escrire,/ Ne Beneiez pas ne l’alonge,/ Ne pas n’i acreistra mençonge” (I do not find it in this book, nor did Dares care to write any more about it, nor does Benoît draw it out, nor will he contribute to a lie) (2063–66). In fact, of course, Benoît greatly elaborates Dares’ account at many points to serve his own compositional plans. Yet he often uses the limiting authority of his source to conclude narrative sequences. By this means he reminds his audience of the literariness of his work, of *its* status as a book.

Benoît’s outer perspectives, focused through his voices as academic

moralist, translator, and rhetorical composer in *Troie*, provide important formal markers for his *roman antique*, and they help to distinguish his poem from contemporary historiography as well as the tradition of the *chansons de geste*.³² But his most original contribution to the formation of a new vernacular literary tradition is his brilliant development of “inner” perspectives in his narrative, which he skillfully orchestrates in relation to his outer frames. These inner perspectives allow a *Durchsehung*, to use Dürer’s term – that is, a limited visual “seeing” from a single point of view of the kind that was, much later on, to become a hallmark of Renaissance painting.³³

Benoît’s play with the art of *Durchsehung* – which is also the art of the voyeur – coincides to some extent with the practices in modern novelistic fiction of inventing verisimilar, psychologically dense, circumstantial narrative. While the French clerk’s distanced, outer perspectives are more personalized and subtle than those of most medieval historians, they are not without parallel in twelfth-century *estoires*. What makes his *roman antique* technically new and formally distinctive is his delicate alternation of a detached academic, historical account of Troy’s fall with a strictly circumstantial, richly imagined inner view of the same matter.

To put the technical situation in different terms, we move, through Benoît’s inner perspective, from exegetic and diegetic, or interpretive and narrative modes of presenting the story to a mimetic mode. The narrator enters into specific characters’ experiences which are clearly *not* his own *as if* he were not only observing individual scenes but living inside the minds and situations of his ancient protagonists. Here we are in the presence of “fiction” as something invented or fabricated but made to seem like the immediate, actual experience of characters in particular historical moments belonging to *their* time and place.³⁴

Important precedents in eleventh- and twelfth-century vernacular poetry and art may well have aided Benoît in developing his inner perspective on the ancient *matière* of Troy. One of the most striking features of the *chansons de geste* is the narrator’s repeated invitation to the audience to “see” or “hear” the action being described. As if he were a spectator on the battlefield, the *Roland*-poet, for example, calls on his listeners to visualize scenes with him, telling them what they would have seen: “Ki puis veïst Rollant e Oliver/ De lur espees e ferir e capler!” (One could see then Roland and Oliver striking and slashing with their swords!) (1680–81).³⁵ The author of the *Roman de Thèbes* had made this technique, which Jean-Charles Payen calls “visualisation épique,” a central feature of his narrative construction.³⁶ He regularly emphasizes the sensory impact of the passing scene with the imperfect subjunctive. If you had been present to

a given event, he suggests, "veissiez" (you would have been seeing), and "oissiez" (you would have been hearing). This device has the effect of bringing the poem's action steadily into the foreground. The visual impact is made immediate and affective even as the poet directs attention to the scene's thematic significance. A comparable technique in Romanesque manuscript illumination serves a similar purpose. An author, present in a scene, directs the audience to "see" the action by pointing a finger at it, though in such cases, we are not drawn, as we are in the *chansons de geste*, directly into the spatio-temporal world of the narrative.³⁷ One effect of this technique, whether in poetry or painting, is to contemporize the action and to minimize the distance between the audience, the characters, and the argument.

Benoît may have drawn to some extent on vernacular literary precedents and contemporary painting for his inner perspective in *Troie*; but his far greater debts, I think, are to his principal *auctor*, Dares, who presents himself as the eye-witness historian of the Trojan War, and to Ovid's *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses*. As is often the case in the evolution of medieval literary techniques and traditions, profound innovations result from one writer's brilliant adaptation of the merest suggestion in a prior text or texts.

The figure of Dares in the *De excidio Troiae* gave Benoît license to embark upon technical experiments not attempted before in medieval narrative. What Dares offered him above all was the point of view of the direct, educated observer who, as Benoît says in his prologue, "chascun jor ensi l'escriveit,/ Come il o ses ieuz le veeit./ Tot quant qu'il faiseient le jor/ O en bataille o en estor,/ Tot escriveit la nuit après" (each day wrote it just as he saw it with his eyes, whatever they did that day either in battle or in combat, he wrote it all the night after) (105-9). When, later in his poem, Benoît returns to the figure of Dares, he shows us the author darting in and out of tents and pavilions in order to interview the participants in the war so that he can record his portraits of them. Dares, it must be noted, had offered only the slightest hints for Benoît's practice of *Durchsehung*, and the *De excidio Troiae* certainly does not exploit the possibilities for eye-witness reportage. Yet, on the basis of Dares' authority as he conceives it, Benoît constructs an elaborate network of immediate, eye-witness perspectives in the *Roman de Troie* of a kind that is radically new in medieval narrative.

Moreover, in *Troie*, the teller's intimate views of Trojan life merge at times with dramatizations of his ancient protagonists' inner consciousness. At irregular intervals, both Benoît's academic, clerkly stance and his inner, non-judgmental modes of narration yield to directly rendered interior monologues by characters speaking about love. The dramatization of individual thought-processes is anticipated in the *Roman d'Eneas*, particularly in the studies of Dido, Lavine, and Eneas in love,³⁸ as we shall see in

chapter 3. To explore the psychic states of their pagan lovers, both the *Eneas*-poet and Benoît clearly turned to Ovid, and especially to the *Heroides* and the *Metamorphoses*. By allowing several of their characters to speak at length in monologues, both poets, like Ovid, accord them moments of subjective, if sometimes unreliable, authority. As Wayne Booth has pointed out, "any sustained inside view, of whatever depth, temporarily turns the character whose mind is shown into a narrator."³⁹ In shifting narratorial power and energy to a number of his ancient characters, Benoît, like the *Eneas*-poet, greatly complicates his narrative and its ethical argument. The inexperienced young pagans in love who analyze their passions powerfully affect our assessment of their situations and also of Troy's fall. No omniscient narration could bring us as effectively into the midst of the ironies and poignancy surrounding the Trojans' lives and hopes as they move towards their own destruction.

Benoît's manipulations of perspective must have been worked out as he was composing *Troie*. But his decisions are consistent enough to form a pattern or system *a posteriori*, which provided one important basis for Boccaccio and Chaucer's later experiments in point of view, narrative authority, and fictive mimesis. While Benoît turns over his narratorial power to his characters only at intervals in his poem, Boccaccio will make his tellers' and characters' private, inward reflections the principal focus of his fictions. As we shall see in chapters 4 and 5, he allows an Ovidian inner perspective to dominate his *Filostrato* and to vie for control in his *Teseida*. Yet, in the *Filostrato*, the poet's carefully orchestrated management of his formal composition, his narrator's occasional moral commentary, and his characters' clouded sense of public responsibility subtly gloss the *storia*, taking the place of Benoît's outer academic pose. In a cumulative, formal way, Boccaccio prepares for the clerkly exegesis that dominates his poem's last narrative segment. In the *Teseida*, he plays his lover-narrator's private, passionate point of view not only against the force of his scholastically organized *libri* and Teseo's exemplary virtue but also against an "objective" exegetical commentary in the margins.

Chaucer, who, in taking up the form of the *roman antique*, had both Benoît and Boccaccio as mentors, experiments in radically new ways with point of view. Yet the influence of his forebears is everywhere apparent in his innovations. In *Troilus*, as we shall see in chapter 6, he greatly extends Benoît's techniques of multiple perspective, granting each of his key characters the power to construct his or her subjective "version" of the Trojan matter. At the same time, he narrows the boundaries of his tale, as Boccaccio had done, giving central interest to the inner consciousness of Troilus and Criseyde as young pagan lovers. But Chaucer also complicates the mimetic practices he had inherited from his predecessors. Characters

dramatizing their inner consciousness in the French and Italian *romans antiques* are not stylistically differentiated. Their debates and conversations share a common level of diction, and their inner dramas mirror values appropriate for their high estate and their socially sanctioned gender roles. Chaucer, by contrast, delicately distinguishes his characters' inner lives – and their stylistic inflections⁴⁰ – by gender and class as well as ethical persuasion. Troilus' language of love differs from Criseyde's and Pandarus'. Though Criseyde and Pandarus *can* speak as Troilus does, they do not think as he does (as their conversations with each other and their inner reflections indicate). By the same token, though Criseyde shares her uncle's bourgeois pragmatism and can participate in Troilus' aristocratic lyricism, she differs fundamentally from both male characters in her "feminine" modes of thinking and acting. In Chaucer's argument, she sees and interprets the world she inhabits *as a woman*, who, partly because of her gender, partly because of the mortal world's ways, cannot construct a stable, consistent, self-determined life in war-torn Troy.⁴¹

The *Knight's Tale* too derives a good part of its power from Chaucer's experimental play with perspective, though in that poem his pagan characters, like Boccaccio's in the *Teseida*, all speak and think in the same social register. His Knight-narrator, however, is more homely and practical than his protagonists. He is by turns the genial, detached teller of an "olde storie" (Benoît's outer perspective) and the intensely involved eye-witness to the events he records. But the Knight, like the *Troilus*-narrator and like his French and Italian predecessors, allows his pagan characters to wrest control of the narrative from him as they reveal their inner consciousness in moments of passional as well as metaphysical crisis.

Benoît's art of Durchsehung

One of the richest examples in the *Roman de Troie* of Benoît's play with point of view occurs near the beginning of the poem in the long account of Jason's fateful journey to Colchis and his relationship with Medea. Much could be said of the poet's description of Jason's journey, and particularly his treatment of the passage of time. But for our purposes the greatest interest lies in the moment of Jason's arrival in the capital city of Jaconitès, where he will meet Medea, vow his love to her, and learn how to win the golden fleece.

First, the author draws us into the scene of the arrival, speaking as if he were an observer of the event. He details the costumes of Jason and his companions, concentrating on their rich fabrics: "Li plus povres ot

vesteüre/ Riche e bien faite a sa mesure" (The poorest had an outfit rich and well made to his measure) (1145-46). Then, as he describes the city, we see materializing before us elegant walled and turreted battlements "de fin marbre," rich houses, great palaces, high keeps, peopled with "chevaliers e marcheanz/ ... Dames ... mout e puceles, ... E bourgeois cointes e beles" (knights and merchants ... many ladies and maidens ... and town-bred women pleasant and attractive) (1155-58).

But the narrator's is not the only eye-witness perspective Benoît offers. He complements a detailed overview of the city with the narrower vision of the citizens as they watch the Greeks walking through their streets:

A merveille les esgarderent,
Quant il en la cité entrerent
Cil des rues e des soliers,
Des fenestres e des planchiers (1175-78)

(From the streets and doorways, from the windows and balconies, they watched with astonishment when they entered the city.)

Here Benoît shows himself as the narrator *watching* the citizens of Jaconitès who, in turn, are *watching* Jason and his companions. The double perspective intensifies our sense of the particularity of the scene and its immediacy.⁴² It serves, furthermore, to create the effect of depth and even three-dimensionality. Characters and setting interact, drawn together by the observers – both by the narrator and by the citizens of Jaconitès.

As Benoît makes the scene still more particular, he brings us to the king's palace *through* as well as beyond Jason's approach to it. He gives us, so to speak, a miniaturist's rendering of the court architecture as it contains and frames the various activities of the courtiers:

... il vindrent el palais,
Ou Oëtès li reis esteit,
Qui un grant plait le jor teneit.
Devant la sale de la tor,
Fors des arvous del parleor,
Ot une place grant e lee,
De haut mur tote avironee;
La trait durot a un archier:
La joërent maint chevalier
As dez, as eschès e as tables,
E as autres gieus deportables. (1182-92)

(They came into the palace where Oëtès the king was, who was holding a great *plait* that day. In front of the tower hall, outside the arched vaults of the *parleor*, there was a large and wide outdoor area, surrounded by a high wall. It was a bowshot wide. Many knights were playing at dice, chess and backgammon, and other recreational games.)

Benoît's fictive imagination of the king's palace and its environs turns upon an interplay between particularized setting and narrative action. The king hears legal arguments in his *parleor* with its vaulted ceilings (a room about which more will be said in the next chapter), while the courtiers enjoy themselves at various games in a walled outdoor area.

Benoît, even more than the *Eneas*-poet, made such intimate, detailed reports of domestic architectural spaces a key formal and material feature of the *roman antique*. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, Boccaccio and Chaucer were to exploit brilliantly this play with literal, particularized, domestic spaces. Boccaccio uses his Criseida's *palazzo* and her *loggia* as well as the metaphoric spaces of the kingdom of love in his *Filostrato*, while Chaucer manipulates the ordinary architecture of specific houses – Criseyde's, Deiphobus', Pandarus' – as frames for unfolding the stages of his hero's love in *Troilus and Criseyde*. And in the *Knight's Tale*, as V.A. Kolve has shown, he capitalizes on the spaces of Theseus' prison, palace garden, and amphitheater to organize both his narrative and his ethical argument.⁴³

One of Benoît's most brilliant and illuminating manipulations of a medievalized domestic setting in relation to character, perspective, and action occurs in Medea's *chambre*. The private bedroom was a relatively new phenomenon in twelfth-century architecture, and Benoît seems to have recognized its special possibilities for developing the drama of Ovidian love. In the scene we are considering, Medea, in her room, is longing for a first love-tryst with Jason. Through Benoît's eyes, we watch her as she waits impatiently for the right moment to send for him. Not only the setting but specific diurnal time particularizes the scene as Benoît enters fully into Medea's consciousness:

Tant a le soleil esguardé
Que ele le vit esconsé . . .
E quant le jor en vit alé,
N'ot ele pas tot achevé:
Soventes feiz a esguardé
La lune s'ele esteit levee. (1469–70; 1473–76)

(She watched the sun so long that she saw it set. And when she saw the day gone, she had not finished; many times she had looked [to see] whether the moon had risen.)

Benoît continues to observe Medea as she goes to the door of her room to listen to the noises in the hall below. Is anyone talking of sleep? When will the men retire? Medea leaves the door and goes to sit on her bed.

Now the narrator as voyeur very close to his scene enters his commentary:

Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie*

Mais jo cuit bien certainement
Qu'el n'i serra pas longement. (1511-12)

(But I certainly think that she will not be there long.)

He is, of course, right. Medea gets up, restless, and goes to open a window, looks at the moon, and observes with annoyance that it is past midnight. She closes the window, goes to the middle of the room, and listens. The noise in the hall has diminished. She goes to the door and looks out over the hall. The chamberlains are preparing the courtiers' beds. Jason has lain down on his bed. The time has come for Medea to act.

Absorbing an Ovidian pattern into his story, Benoît introduces a go-between. Medea takes her governess into her confidence, asking her to bring Jason to her. But *la vieille*, with a sense of decorum and appropriate staging granted her by Benoît, first advises Medea to get into bed:

... premierement
Vos couchiez, si sera plus gent.
De la nuit est alé partie,
Sil tiendreit tost a vilenie
Qu'a couchier fussez a tel hore,
Quar bien en est mais tens e hore. (1543-48)

(First get into bed: it will be more polite. The night is already well past; he would consider it poor manners that you were going to bed at such an hour, for it is high time [for you to be already in bed].)

Nowhere in medieval narrative before Benoît, except perhaps embryonically in scriptural commentaries, do we have so concentrated a study of characters observed by a teller in the margin, as it were, surveying a scene *within* and *through* a setting. The space of the bedroom and its architectural details – its window, its door, its bed – become centrally important to the unfolding of the action and the direction of the story. The intimate setting provides an appropriate context for the central action of the episode – a dramatic monologue. Moreover, only the narrator and the audience are privy to Medea's consciousness as she paces in her room and debates with herself. Poets – and particularly Ovid – had certainly entered the bedrooms and minds of their heroines before Benoît. But no medieval poet had so fully developed the physical details of the bedroom as a concrete, particular architectural space, containing and framing the intimate secret feelings of a woman in love. Here, notions about the *livre* as a physical, conceptual, and metaphoric space for academic moral wisdom – the poem's outer frame – are displaced, if only temporarily, by the architectural "places" of the poet's fiction as these offer a context for developing the inner lives of individual characters.

The governess's advice to Medea to get into bed gives Benoît an opportunity to halt the action in order to provide a detailed description of the bed: "onques nus hom ne vit plus gent" (never has anyone seen one more elegant) (1552). With a keen sense of dramatic timing, he not only brings us still more fully into the particularities of the setting; he also heightens the dramatic tension by interrupting the narrative just as we, with Medea, anticipate Jason's arrival. Step by step, then, Benoît imagines *la vieille* as she proceeds on her mission to Jason's bed. Even the lighting does not escape the poet's attention as he considers how the governess and Jason are able to see their way: "Clarté i ot, tres bien i veient,/ Car dui cierge grant i ardeient" (They had illumination, they saw very well because two great candles were burning there) (1581-82).

Finally, after Medea, first pretending to be asleep, has greeted Jason, the governess exits to her own room:

La vieille ensemble les laissa,
En autre chambre s'en entra. (1599-1600)

(The old woman left them together; she went into another chamber.)

Throughout this scene and the ensuing conversation between the lovers, Benoît's narrator assumes the role of the reflective observer – an observer attentive to the importance of effective staging as well as the nuances of intense, passionate feeling.

At the end of the conversation, however, the poet removes himself abruptly from the dramatic action and reverts to his outer perspective, putting on his pose as artful composer, moralist, and learned translator, who has as his primary responsibility the telling of a long story to an audience whose interest may flag. This outer frame suddenly draws the audience away from the scene, placing them at a great distance from the matter. We are reminded of the poem as a literary composition and a *livre* as we listen to the moralist's condemnation of Jason's future treachery and infidelity. By Benoît's juxtaposition of perspectives, we as the audience are made privy at once to the consciousness of the ancient characters and the fragility of their situation, both historically and morally speaking. In the bedroom, Jason, the lover, has just agreed to swear his fidelity to Medea by an oath. The narrator leaves the bedroom scene in order to predict the future:

Mais envers li s'en parjura;
Covenant ne lei ne li tint. (1636-37)

(But he perjured himself towards her; he kept neither covenant nor customary law towards her.)

Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie*

Then, at a great distance from his characters and matter, he reminds us of himself as the composer of a *roman* with a great concern for his *modus tractandi*:

Mais jo n'ai or de ço que faire,
Del reconter ne del retraire:
Assez i a d'el a traitier,
Ne le vos quier plus porloignier. (1639-42)

(But I do not concern myself with that now, either to recount or treat it: there is a very great deal of it [i.e., other matter] to discuss, nor do I seek to prolong it for you further.)

Here the poet speaks as a disciple of Horace, bound by principles of economy and due proportion.

Interestingly enough, the narrator's formal and scholarly distancing occurs just before the most intimate scene of the whole sequence – Medea and Jason in bed. It is as if the poet, fearful of seeming to observe the love-making too eagerly, too closely, has retreated to his scholarly, perspicacious frame in order to report and at the same time decline responsibility for so unchaste a scene and action.

As it is, by using both an inner and outer perspective in relation to the same narrative moment, Benoît is able to have the moment both ways. He is at once the learned, moral reader of his ancient, venerable source and the witness of Medea's deflowering in what, in the middle of the twelfth century, might well have been regarded as a sensational moment:

Tote la nuit se jurent puis,
Ensi com jo el Livre truis,
Tot nu a nu e braz a braz.
Autre celee ne vos faz:
Se il en Jason ne pecha,
Cele nuit la despucela;
Quar, s'il voust, ele autretant. (1643-49)

(All night, then, they lay together, as I find in the book, all naked body to naked body, their arms around each other. I do not hide anything from you. And it was not Jason's fault. That night he deflowered her. For, if he wanted it, so did she.)

When Benoît turns to matters of war, he draws heavily on the formulaic style and techniques of the *chansons de geste*. Yet here too we may observe the poet's interest in limiting scenes by direct observation. In some cases Benoît will develop an inner perspective not directly through his narrator *in propria persona*, but through the participants in the war. In the Greeks' attack on Laomedon, for example, as Peleus' troops advance, Benoît shows us how the peasants observe them and how they feel about them:

Chaucer and the *roman antique*

Li paisant de la contree
Virent la grant gent aünee,
Virent les nes e les armez:
Ço les a fortment esfrees. (2379–82)

(The peasants of the country saw the great folk assembled, they saw the ships and men-at-arms: this frightened them a great deal.)

Such moments as this, as well as the larger, more fully developed dramatic episodes that depend upon “eye-witness” observation and inner drama anticipate the art of the Middle Ages’ greatest romancers.⁴⁴ In the subsequent tradition of the *roman antique*, as I have already suggested, both Boccaccio and Chaucer, depending in part on Benoît, explore the *problem* of narrative point of view in relation to their classical matter. Through their intricately developed narratorial presence, they look back to the ancient past *as* past and morally exemplary. But they also imagine for us how their characters would actually have experienced their own histories within the walls of Troy and Thebes. In addition, Chaucer makes differences in ways of seeing and shaping the matter of Troy a central epistemological issue in his *Troilus*, not only for his pagan characters and Christian narrator, but also for his readers.

Above all, the several inner and outer perspectives as Benoît develops them in *Troie*, raise questions of meaning and interpretation. Different characters within the scene, as well as the narrator as eye-witness observer and Benoît as medieval moralist, translator, and composer, respond in various distinctive ways to what they see and feel. The peasant’s perspective differs from that of the Greek or Trojan warriors, just as Jason’s differs from Medea’s and Medea’s from the narrator’s. Benoît’s commentary periodically explicates the large moral or philosophical meaning of carefully dramatized scenes. Yet the problematic, fictive character of individual episodes remains present, partly because of the very power and density of the inner perspectives that form it. Moreover, Benoît’s habitual concentration on visual detail – whether in the *parleur* or the bedroom or the incredible and marvelous *chambre d’alabastre* – focuses attention on the internal coherence and situational consistency of episodes and their success as convincing fictions *per se*, quite apart from their moral or historical significance.

Inner and outer perspectives: the moral dimension

My analysis thus far may suggest that Benoît’s poem divides uneasily or subconsciously into “inner” and “outer” perspectives, reflecting a kind of schizophrenia on the poet’s part. One might conclude that Benoît actually

preferred the non-judgmental, detailed, dramatic reportage empowered by the eye-witness historian Dares and the example of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides*, but felt himself bound to the larger moral interests of the liberal-arts curriculum. This, however, does not appear to be the case. In general, even the most particularized scenes – scenes which depend on Benoît's detailed imagination of ancient consciousness – serve to enact the deepest moral lessons of the poem. In Benoît's large argument, the intimate perspectives of *esgarder* serve to report the *evanescent* matter of the transitory world. We are actually made to witness the processes of change as we observe images of great opulence and elegance crumble in the melee of war. The most obvious targets for this pattern of construction and destruction are the images of the Trojan cities and buildings, magnificently established by the Trojans and the poet's rhetoric, then tragically destroyed.

For example, as Paris arrives in Tenedon, 7 leagues from Troy, bringing the stolen Helen with him, the poet as observer renders the magnificence of the castle in conjunction with the joy of Paris' reception:

A grant joie les reçut l'om.
Tenedon esteit uns chasteaus
Sor la marine granz e beaus:
De murs de marbre ert clos e joinz,
De Troie esteit set lieus loinz.
Tor i aveit mout bien asise,
S'en esteit mout fort la porprise. (4610-16)

(They were received with great joy. Tenedon was a castle, great and beautiful, on the sea. It was enclosed and surrounded with marble walls, at a distance of seven leagues from Troy. It had a very well built tower [i.e., set on a solid foundation] and the protecting wall was very strong.)

Fourteen hundred lines later, Tenedon under siege is wholly destroyed:

Tot destruisrent, tot trebuchierent
E tote la terre eissillierent.
La contree est mise a dolor:
N'i a vilain ne vavassor
Qui ne guerpisse son maneir. (6047-51)

(They destroyed everything, and laid waste the whole land. The country was reduced to sorrow; there was neither a peasant nor a vassal who did not lose his house.)

To *watch* the collapse of so magnificent and well fortified a place teaches the medieval schoolmasters' lessons on transience and the goods of fortune better than any amount of abstract moralizing would. Benoît's "eye-witness" reports draw the audience again and again to admire material

splendor and strength, then to recognize its fragility. The images of magnificent cities rendered present to us through the poet's inner perspective, then brutally destroyed, require us to share the pain of their loss.

This same lesson of material fragility is also presented through the celebration and subsequent demise of great warriors. For instance, Benoît takes great pains to describe the magnificent Amazon and Trojan partisan, Penthiselea. He gives a long description of her beautiful realm, the Amazons' habits of procreation, and above all, the astonishing beauty of her troops. "Since the world began," he declares, "and as long as it endures,/ there will never be seen such a company" (23475-77).⁴⁵

Two battles later, however, Penthiselea lies dead and the philosophizing narrator gives a detailed account of her dying:

Oëz com faite destinee.
 El n'aveit pas l'eaume lacié,
 El chief li ert tot detrenchié:
 Quant el le vit vers sei venir,
 Premiere le cuida ferir;
 Mais Pirrus tant s'esvertua
 Qu'un coup merveilllos li geta
 A dreit entrel cors e l'escu;
 Sevré li a le braz del bu,
 Tot le li trencha en travers.
 Ensanglentez, pales e pers
 E demi morz la ra saisie.
 ...
 Sor l'erbe vert, fresche e novele
 Li espant tote la cervelle;
 Toz les membres li a trenchiez. (24304-15; 24323-25)

(Hear what her destiny was! She did not have her helmet laced up; it had already been cut to pieces on her head. When she saw him coming towards her she thought of striking him before he could [strike] her. But Pirrus pressed so hard that he dealt her a marvelous blow directly between the body and the shield. He severs her arm from her chest, cuts it all the way through. [While she is] bloody, pale and dark, and half dead, he hits her again . . . On the green grass, fresh and new, he scatters her brain; he cuts off all her limbs.)

This stark and intimate portrait of death contrasts sharply with the Amazon's shining, elegant appearance as a warrior preparing for battle several hundred lines earlier. The narrator in his role as eye-witness-observer paints both detailed pictures of Penthiselea. He also teaches us, in his role as philosopher, that destiny has played a key role in bringing about her gory, tragic death.

Before leaving the subject of multiple perspective in Benoît's poem, I want to recall one more remarkable moment in the *Roman de Troie*. Through it, we observe in a striking way the poet's juxtaposition of narrative perspectives in dialectical relation to each other. In this situation, we notice too the audience's need to reconcile opposed or contrary views about the matter being presented. The episode involves Briseida's departure from Troy, preceding her betrayal of Troilus. Benoît, as academic moralist, frames the event by lambasting women for their changeability. As we have already seen, he also reinforces his position by linking Briseida to the familiar image of *Fortuna*, smiling with one eye, weeping with the other.

Immediately following this condemnation, however, he projects an entirely different attitude, one full of deference to an unnamed patroness, "riche dame de riche rei." The adjustment of perspective coincides with a recognition of his own immediate rhetorical and political situation. Using the authority of Solomon on strong, chaste women, he begins:

De cest, veir, criem g'estre blasmez
 De cele que tant a bontez
 Que hautece a, pris e valor,
 Honesté e sen e honor,
 Bien e mesure e sainteé
 E noble largece e beauté;
 ...
 En cui tote sciënce abonde,
 ...
 Senz mal, senz ire, senz tristece,
 Pousseiz avoir toz jorz leece!

(13457-62; 13465; 13469-70)

(Concerning this, truly, I fear to be blamed by her who has such goodness, such a high station, such worth and courage, integrity, understanding, and honor, moral virtue and measure and piety, and noble generosity and beauty . . . in whom all knowledge abounds . . . Without evil, without anger, without sadness, may you be able to have joy always!)

In this passage, the narrator turns away from the matter of the ancient past in order to speak directly, occasionally, to a contemporary noble woman. Benoît sets the negative example of Briseida's behavior aside for the moment in order to take up very different *materia* – the virtues of his patroness, who may well have been Eleanor of Aquitaine. The adjustment of perspective, the shift in the moral frame, is a strategic, rhetorical one. It emphasizes for us in an especially striking way the poet's play with narrative perspective and framing, apparent in different ways in other parts of the poem.

CONSONANCES OF PERSPECTIVE: THE NARRATOR AND HIS
CHARACTERS IN THE *ROMAN DE TROIE*

The perspectives of the "I" narrator, and his several different attitudes towards the matter of Troy, are not Benoît's only means of projecting his ethical argument. He often intensifies his moral questioning of the Trojan matter through the speeches of the characters whose lives he dramatizes. Characters within the story will echo the narrator's academic commentary, frequently using his very words and phrases. The result is a deepening of the poet's arguments as we hear them from within the narrative action as well as outside it.

Among Benoît's most important surrogates within the walls of Troy are his prophets – Cassandra, Panthus, and Helenus. These prophets explicitly share the wisdom Benoît attributes to the *auctores* and claims for himself as a clerk. Cassandra, who is the most important of the prophetic figures, is "merveilles . . . sciëntose:/ Des arz e des segreiz devins/ Saveit les somes e les fins" (wonderfully learned; she knew the whole ensemble and purposes of the arts and of divine secrets) (5532–34). Helenus, one of Priam's sons, is "de grant sen," "sages poëtes, bons devins:/ Des choses diseit bien les fins" (of great understanding, a wise priest, a good prophet: he told well the outcomes of things) (5390–91). And Panthus is "uns vassaus mout senez,/ De letres sages e fondez" (a very wise vassal, learned and instructed in letters [i.e., the Latin of the arts curriculum]) (4077–78).

These pagan characters, like Benoît the philosopher, are interested in, and know the outcomes of, things. But because they operate *within* the narrative, within the world circumscribed by Benoît's inner perspective, they offer a poignantly ineffective version of the distanced medieval poet's philosophical wisdom. When, for example, in the midst of Priam's great wedding feast for the newly married Paris and Helen, Cassandra cries out in protest, she is quickly removed to *une chambre* where, we are told, she remains for a long time. Her dire warning, from within the story, *before* the avoidable fall of Troy, as she looks on the walls and battlements of a great city, introduces a powerful elegiac note:

"Lasse," fait ele, "quel dolors
Iert, quant charront cez beles tors,
Cist riche mur e cez meisons
E cist palais e cist donjons!" (4897–900)

("Alas," she says, "what sorrow there will be when these beautiful towers fall, this rich wall, and these houses, and this palace, and this stronghold!")

In such speeches as this, Benoît is able to concentrate in a single dramatic voice his own inner and outer perspectives on the events of Troy's fall. As

the poet doubles his narrator's philosophical voice through his pagan prophets, he deepens and intensifies the experience of Trojan destruction and self-destruction. He achieves a similar effect when other less authoritative characters within the action recognize conditions in themselves which have been preached by the narrator from the distance of the poem's outer frame. One such example of this doubling occurs in Benoît's account of Achilles' love affair with Polyxena.

Benoît draws us into the Ovidian temple scene in which Achilles first sees Polixena (about which more will be said in chapter 3). Then he warns us: "pinciez sera d'Amors e mors" (he will be pinched and bitten by love) (17568). Much later on, Achilles, debating with himself, describes his own state in exactly the same terms: "Tant m'a Amors pincié e mors" (So much has love pinched and bitten me) (18086). The two voices present the same lesson, but from two entirely different perspectives. Achilles confirms by his experience what Benoît teaches as academic theory.

A similar, but fuller coincidence of language and sentiment characterizes the narrator and Achilles' mutual recognition that love is foolish. As Achilles, reflecting privately, examines his plight, he says to himself:

Qui est qui contre amor est sage?

Ço ne fu pas Fortis Sanson,

Li reis Daviz ne *Salemon*,

...

Qu'en puis jo mais, se jo desvei,

Se jo refail, se jo folei?

(18044-46; 18049-50; my emphasis)

(Who is there who is wise against love? Strong Samson was not [wise enough], nor King David, nor Solomon... What can I ever do about it, if I err, if I commit a fault, if I act foolishly?)

Four hundred lines later, as the narrator in his philosophical voice comments on the love affair, he declares:

Qui est qui vers Amors est sage?

Ço n'est il pas ne ne puet estre:

En Amors a trop grevos maistre;

Trop par lit grevose leçon.

Ço parut bien a *Salemon*

...

Qui tres bien est d'amor espris,

Il n'a en sei sen ne reison.

(my emphasis; 18448-52; 18458-59)

(Who is there who is wise towards Love? There is no one, nor can there be; we find Love a very hard master. He reads a very difficult lesson; this was clear to Solomon... Whoever is fully enflamed by love has neither understanding nor reason.)

What must interest us is the complexity of effect Benoît achieves by using the same words and phrases in two different contexts, reflecting two different perspectives. The first speech is spoken by the young, foolish lover unable to escape love's entrapment: the second, by the medieval poet overseeing the entire affair from a great distance in time. The two perspectives converge as we recognize, on the basis of Achilles' exemplary testimony, the poignant, lived truth of the medieval *auctor's* academic argument.

BENOÎT'S MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES AND THE MEDIEVAL
POETIC "I"

As I have been suggesting up to this point, there is in Benoît's system of multiple perspectives a strong element of impersonation. The poet enacts by turns the roles of the scholarly moralist, the careful translator, the Horatian composer, and the eye-witness chronicler, privy to the most intimate details of historical events as they unfold. He also raises some of his key moral questions through his characters. The roles he assumes, and those he distributes among his characters, are not stylistically differentiated. But they do represent several alternative, sometimes contradictory positions in relation to the same matter. Benoît's most original contribution to the form of the *roman antique* lies in his play with a multiform authorial presence and with several dramatized perspectives as he gives form to his ancient *historia*.

At the same time, an important check governs Benoît's manipulations of voice and literary form in relation to meaning. His play is balanced by the steady, controlling authority of the *granz livres* and the collective moral wisdom of the canonical Latin *philosophes*. In his own *livre*, Benoît always subordinates his management of perspective and impersonation to academic ideas of *auctoritas* and ethical responsibility. These notions transcend any individual author and reside, rather, in notions of the classical *liber* and in the wisdom of the canonical *auctores*. Writers throughout the later Middle Ages maintained a faith in the possibility of normative secular wisdom, and many of them also believed that the works of the great authors participated in and revealed that wisdom.⁴⁶ Moreover, they hoped (though sometimes with tongue in cheek) that their own poems would bring *sapientia* or *scientia* to unlettered audiences. Benoît de Sainte-Maure's several poses and perspectives in the *Roman de Troie* do not give us a portrait of the biographical Benoît. But they do propose a composite authorial image, one designed to serve as an instrument for the poem's moral arguments – arguments which, not surprisingly, largely

derive from the arts curriculum and the medieval schoolmasters' lessons on the classical *auctores*.

Leo Spitzer was one of the first scholars to call attention to the distinctive character of the medieval poetic "I" and to distinguish it from the "I" of romantic autobiography.⁴⁷ Spitzer concludes that the medieval poetic "I" always represents "mankind in general." In a large sense, Spitzer is right. Yet the issue is more complex than he suggests, at least in the case of the *romans antiques* as an emergent vernacular literary form. As Benoît's practice indicates, the manipulations of narrative perspective and attitude, organized preeminently around the figure of a narrating "I," are based not on an ontological but a rhetorical and strategic sense of the writer's relationship to his text and his audience. Using several perspectives, Benoît speaks in his poem as an academically trained rhetor aiming to persuade his audience to certain views about Troy's fall.

Some important theoretical descriptions, mainly of texts used in the schools, support Benoît's rhetorical practice, though his practice goes far beyond the theory.⁴⁸ Most medieval discussions of Boethius' *De consolazione philosophiae*, for example, include a description of the author's division of his argument into three distinct speaking voices. As Conrad of Hirsau puts it, "Three characters are brought forward by Boethius: Miserable Boethius seeking to be consoled; Philosophy, who consoles; Boethius the author who speaks about both of them."⁴⁹ In the case of the *Consolatio*, "Boetius miser" and "Boetius auctor" both speak through the narrative "I"; *Philosophia*, on the other hand, is a dramatized character. But she too represents Boethian wisdom, and her voice, like the others, carries the Boethian argument forward.⁵⁰

Complementary theories of authorial voicing in very well known school commentaries on the classics also encouraged medieval writers to speak at times through fully dramatized characters. Servius, for example, explaining Virgil's first Eclogue, writes:

A certain shepherd is introduced lying safe and at leisure under a tree in order to make a musical composition; another, indeed, has been expelled from his homelands with his flock, who, when he has seen Tityrus reclining, speaks. And in this place we must understand Virgil under the character [*persona*] of Tityrus; however, not everywhere, but wherever the argument demands it. (my emphasis)⁵¹

Here, according to Servius, the author presents himself through his characters, not to reveal his personality, but to serve his argument. Tityrus does not *always* represent Virgil, but only when the argument requires it. In this dispensation, we are able to discover the author's presence not as a

distinctive personality, but *as a writer* strictly speaking, in his *arrangements* of character and voice in relation to the argument being made.

While the comments I have quoted do not explain precisely how authorial impersonation works in a poem like Benoît's, they do provide an important rationale for its use. They, together with the evidence of Benoît's *Troie*, encourage us to examine the medieval poets' complex management of multiple authorial *personae* and perspectives in the whole tradition of the *romans antiques* with a closer scrutiny than has generally been given. For what rhetorical and ethical purposes, we must ask, does the poet assume this or that voice, this or that perspective? For what reason is one narratorial voice or dramatized character's speech juxtaposed with another in an episode or series of episodes?

In the case of Benoît's early and influential *Roman de Troie*, the authority the poet garners for himself and the way in which he marks his presence in the poem is, as we have seen, by no means univocal. Like his immediate predecessor in classicizing narrative *en roman*z – the *Thèbes*-poet – the self-conscious Benoît aligns himself in his prologue with the great *philosophes*. He also inscribes his name in his work. Yet, paradoxically, in his long narrative, he uses this very identification as a means of establishing for himself an equivocal, or, better, multivocal position in relation to his poetic material. Locating himself as a "middleman," mediating between the classical writers, their *materia*, and his aristocratic audience, he constitutes the field of his *livre* as a large and flexible space for rhetorical, ethical, and dramatic play. Modeling himself on the *auctores* of the arts curriculum, even as he defers to them, Benoît develops a network of perspectives or points of observation through which readers may view and judge the episodes of his poem. At times he draws his audience into the interior of a given scene. But he also provides vantage points far apart from the action as a means of escape from the tragic fall he is recounting. The result is a multidimensional, centrifugal narrative, fundamentally different in kind from the foregrounded, centripetal narrative structure characteristic of the *chansons de geste*.

Michel Foucault has identified as a modern condition of writing the "creating [of] a space into which the writing subject constantly disappears."⁵² In fact, this is something like what the twelfth-century clerk, Benoît de Sainte-Maure, achieves for himself in his narrative as he translates, by turns, the roles and matter of the various *auctores* who serve his *roman antique*, and assumes the voices of their pagan characters. What distinguishes his "disappearances," however, from those of his modern counterparts, as he takes on various roles and develops different perspectives, is a steady point of reference in the books and collective moral

wisdom of the (medievalized) ancients. As I have suggested in this chapter, Benoît takes on himself the task of orchestrating a *collectio* of perspectives, philosophical arguments, and narrative materials. His purpose is to make a *livre* designed to instruct aristocrats in the secular art of responsible moral conduct.

Benoît invites his courtly public, no doubt listening over the course of several days and several readings to the destruction of Troy, to judge the unfolding lives of his ancient heroes and heroines and then to compare them with their own conduct, their own history.⁵³ When the poet tells them that Troy fell because of “assez petit d’uevre” (2831), when he shows them how private passion undermines public responsibility, they are invited to think of their own situations, their own conduct, whether negative or positive in relation to their own, present commonweal. As we shall see in the next chapter, the authors of the French *romans antiques* characteristically passed on their academic moral *sen* not by direct instruction but by forms of dialogical debate enacted by ancient characters in difficult, uncertain circumstances. By the way in which they dispose their classical materials, the poets and their characters raise specific, hypothetical, problematic questions of secular moral conduct, and they invite their small aristocratic audiences to “judge the right.”

*Plaits, debates, and judgments in the Roman de
Thèbes, the Roman de Troie, and the Roman
d'Eneas*

In the *Roman de Thèbes*, in a delicate moral situation involving an accusation of political treachery, Othon, one of King Eteocles' vassals, directs his lord to "have the judgment first and then act accordingly."¹ The judgment Othon demands of Eteocles points tellingly to one of the most distinctive formal features of the twelfth-century *romans antiques*. In this chapter I examine ways in which both vernacular epic and classical academic forms of debate, questioning, and *jugement* help to shape the *Roman de Thèbes*, the *Roman de Troie*, and the *Roman d'Eneas*. These forms – inherited equally from the judicial trials or *plaits* of earlier vernacular literature (and life), the oratory of Latin epic, and medieval school practices of rhetorical disputation – enter more or less centrally into the making of all three of the twelfth-century French *romans antiques*. Ingeniously sidestepping matters of Christian doctrine by translating ancient secular matter, the clerkly *romanciers* used dramatized debate and argumentation to pose circumstantial moral questions of crucial interest to their lay aristocratic public. The issues they raised had to do not with religious belief but rather with possible or hypothetical systems of ethical conduct and value put to the test in the context of an uncertain world without the benefit of Christian revelation.²

Signs of a twelfth-century academic interest in ancient modes of ethical argumentation appear in a manuscript of great importance for the history of medieval romance – the codex containing the only extant remnant of Alberic of Pisançon's *Alexandre*.³ Alberic's fragment is copied on two folia part way through a twelfth-century copy of Quintus Curtius' Latin *Historia Alexandrii*. The manuscript is a fine one, written in a beautiful, small Carolingian minuscule, and the scribe who inserted Alberic's vernacular fragment on the two blank folia must have recognized the material connection between the Latin and the vernacular text. Only 105 lines of the poem appear in the manuscript; yet these astonishing verses – a clerkly

prologue and the beginning of a narrative about Alexander the Great – boldly declare the value of *secular* narrative poetry *en romanz*. Critics disagree as to the generic status of the *Alexandre* fragment. But however we label it, Alberic's poem directly prepares the way for the twelfth-century *romans antiques* and their progeny.⁴

There is no reason to believe that the scribe who copied the fragment of *Alexandre* also made the marginal Latin annotations in the manuscript of Quintus Curtius. Yet the occasional notes, commenting on the Latin history, have a striking significance for us. Of the relatively few glosses, many point specifically to "orationes," marking the location of important speeches in the text and sometimes explaining their tenor. The glossator points, for example, to an "ingrata oratio" (Bk. IV, f. 21v); a "dolosa oratio" (Bk. V, f. 39r); an "oratio in consilio habita" (Bk. VII, f. 69v).⁵ Such notes as these would have no more than passing interest, were it not for the fact that the authors of the three mid-twelfth-century French *romans antiques*, probably composed within thirty years or so of Alberic's poem, exercise themselves very fully in the art of oratorical debate on hypothetical issues. All of them invent carefully contrived persuasive speeches and rhetorical debates for their ancient heroes and heroines as an integral part of their compositions. Their protagonists argue often and at length about public as well as personal issues both in royal councils and in private conversations.

This interest in dramatized debate in the *romans antiques* coincides not only with the study of classical oratory but also with the practice of disputation over hypothetical moral cases or *quaestiones* in the twelfth-century schools. A precious early testimony by Notker of Liège (c. 942–1007) gives a good picture of the character of classroom debate. In the prologue to his life of St. Remacle, Notker is actually denigrating such rhetorical exercises as fiction.⁶ He prefers, he says, to report true "gesta et tempora." For our purposes, however, his denigration constitutes a charming epitome of just those academic precepts and practices which were to assume a central role in the formation of the *romans antiques*. What Notker castigates as fictive (and frivolous) disputation in the late tenth or early eleventh century was to become the core of the twelfth-century clerkly poets' compositional program. Notker first satirizes what he seems to regard as the "magic" of rhetoric – its power to transform one reality into another – to expand or contract, to create greatness where there is none and vice versa. Then he criticizes those students who invent (*fingere*) speeches on a given topic (*thematē*), arguing first with the words of the one who has been injured in a given situation, then with the words of the one who has inflicted the injury.⁷

William, the son of Stephen, in his life of Thomas à Becket, gives us another fascinating glimpse into the lives of schoolboys, this time in twelfth-century London. On feast days, in the three cathedral schools, he writes, "students engage in disputation, some by means of demonstrative (epideictic) argument, others by dialectic. Some generate enthymemes, while others speak in syllogisms. Some engage in disputations among contenders for the sake of showing off; others dispute for the sake of truth."⁸ William's account of the London students' disputations draws us directly and concretely into the academic milieu which also informs the art of the twelfth-century French *romans antiques*. If we are to judge from the way schoolboys spent their holidays, argumentation of a strictly formal but also playful kind occupied a central place in their educational program. Verbal contests – both rhetorical and dialectical – clearly provided an important means of demonstrating intellectual prowess and oratorical skill.

In an important article, Wesley Trimpi has traced the history of rhetorical *quaestiones* and formal argumentation on both sides of a case in the schools from the time of Quintilian through the Middle Ages.⁹ Using the example of Andreas Capellanus and Boccaccio, he has also persuasively tied these exercises to the quality of medieval fiction in general. Trimpi argues that the practice of the fictional debate, as it was transferred from the classroom to the writing of fiction, enabled poets to raise hypothetical questions about matters of morality and equity without committing themselves to a single didactic position. The scholastic *form* of the rhetorical debate on both sides of the question permitted, as Trimpi puts it, "a temporary sanctuary from initial and final causes." It allowed poets to develop a "*private perspective . . . qua artist*" as distinct from the "*communal perspective of the artist qua human being*."¹⁰

In fact, the matter of ancient history chosen by the authors of the French *romans antiques* provided just such a metaphoric "sanctuary" within which to raise and debate circumstantial moral questions about the motives, values, and conduct of their rather highly individualized pagan characters. By developing several different public and private perspectives – both their narrators' and their characters' – through dramatized argument, poets could implicate themselves and their public in adjudicating the often-surprising, unpredictable decisions of pagan heroes and heroines in their rhetorical and historical unfolding.¹¹ It is clear from the many formal debates and *quaestiones* in their experimental fictions that the French *romanciers* (as well as their Italian and English successors) recognized and took full advantage of their temporary, contingent poetic freedom.

Plaits, debates, and judgments

PLAIT, JUDICIAL DUEL, AND JUDGMENT IN THE *CHANSON DE ROLAND*

In order to understand the special character of debate in the twelfth-century *romans antiques*, we must turn briefly to a form of juridical debate that plays a major structural part in the *chansons de geste*, a literary genre to which the earliest romancers owe a profound formal debt.¹² Some of the most brilliant improvisations in the first secular fictions *en romanz* occur at the intersection of earlier medieval forensic debate forms with modes of hypothetical debate and classical Latin oratory studied and practiced in twelfth-century classrooms.

In the last movement of the *Chanson de Roland*, as the poet formally announces the beginning of Ganelon's trial, he uses a technical term to describe the legal proceedings. "Des ore," he declares, "cumencet le *plait* e les noveles/ De Guenelun, ki traïsun ad faite" (3747-48). In an important sense, the entire poem serves as a preparation for this climactic "plait" or criminal trial.¹³ The poet himself acts as a judge in the poem, a surrogate for Charlemagne, introducing Ganelon at the very beginning as the one "ki la traïsun fist" (178). From the start, he places himself outside and above the several "conseils" in order to observe the lying speeches of partisans on both sides and interpret them for the audience. The formal trial and the judicial duel that conclude the *Roland* confirm his judgments and assure the audience that God and justice prevail even when rhetoric and human judgment fail.

The poet's term, "plait," used to describe Ganelon's trial, deserves our attention. Its literary history draws us to the very heart of those transformations that characterize the transition in twelfth-century vernacular narrative from epic to *romanz*. Derived from the Latin *placitum*, the word *plaiz* originally named certain formal judicial and deliberative procedures popularized by Charlemagne.¹⁴ The *Chanson de Roland* preserves for us the most ancient poetic account of these procedures, which include both councils and criminal trials. In both cases, oral, formulaic debate among the assembled counselors leads to the rendering of a judgment based not on truth but on the speakers' powers of rhetorical persuasion and a consensus reached by the audience as jurors.

At Ganelon's trial, Charlemagne initiates the proceedings in his royal role as chief justiciar of the realm. He speaks first, accusing Ganelon of treachery, but he asks his assembled barons to "judge the right." As the Franks listen to the arguments, they define their role, declaring as if in a single voice, "Ore en tendrum conseil" (3761). Ganelon speaks in his own

defense. His self-presentation, as he cries out in a loud voice, suggests the noisiness of such proceedings and the ritual quality of the oratory. Ganelon denies his treachery, claiming that his stepson, Roland, had wronged him and earned his revenge.¹⁵ The Frankish barons then take counsel concerning the case. Those of Auvergne, whom the poet describes as “li plus curteis” (3796), suggest acquittal, arguing that Roland is dead and cannot be brought back, no matter how great the fine levied against Ganelon. The argument, based as it is more on compassion than justice, perhaps helps to define a very early moral meaning of the word *curteis*, though the term may mean simply “skilled in law.”¹⁶ All the counselors but one – the young Thierry – agree to this decision and the barons go to the emperor with their judgment. Charlemagne, however, is unhappy with their consensus and accuses them of a felony against him. At this point, we are aware of the fragility of a judicial process based on opposing rhetorical arguments and decided by a group judgment. As if to emphasize the dangers inherent in this oratorical process, the emperor overrules the barons’ opinion.

Responding to Charlemagne’s dissatisfaction with the trial’s outcome, Thierry, the single dissenter from the counselors’ decision, offers an alternative mode of judgment to decide the case. He will engage in a judicial duel. Pinabel accepts the challenge. Now, suddenly, the judgment is no longer a human but a divine one. Charlemagne looks to God to determine the outcome: “E! Deus,” he declares, “le dreit en esclargiez!” (Oh! God, let justice blaze forth!) (3891). The shift to the duel or *ordalia* is crucial within the structure of the *chanson de geste*. It is not finally human but divine justice that will decide the case. In the last movement of the *Roland* the poet shifts abruptly from human rhetorical debate and judgment to an absolute divine plane. When Thierry strikes a mortal blow against Pinabel, the Franks see it as God’s judgment, and they cry out with one voice: “Deus i ad fait vertut!/ Asez est dreiz que Guenes seit pendut/ E si parent, ki plaidet unt pur lui” (God has performed a miracle there! It is just that Ganelon be hanged, together with his kinsmen who upheld his suit) (3931–33).

Ganelon’s *plait* in the *Chanson de Roland*, concluded by a *judicium Dei*, bears valuable witness to the kind of formulaic oral debate among aristocratic peers that characterized the courts of Carolingian, and later, feudal France and England until the end of the twelfth century.¹⁷ Ganelon’s trial proceeds by means of formulaic oratory with speeches known in advance and performed according to traditional rules.¹⁸ The function of Charlemagne’s court, as well as the feudal courts that followed it, was, as Howard Bloch has argued, “essentially commemorative. Its public, oral,

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and formulaic procedures were designed to recall the practices of the past in order that they might be applied to a situation in the present."¹⁹

Most importantly for our purposes, the poet's management of all of the poem's debates and of the concluding *plait* is unrelentingly centripetal. At the center are God, the king, and the poet. Though ironies and lies may prevail in individual councils, an abiding sense of truth pulls all the segments of the narrative towards a fitting and just resolution. All of the debates, flawed though they may be by treacherous intent or inaccurate judgment, submit finally to a higher authority vested in divine justice, the monarch, and the poet. The details and force of the public oratory are less important than the realization and celebration of a just political order. If the poem is an arena for conciliar debate, the resolution achieved transcends human capabilities and directs the audience to a single, unanimous response.

PLAITS IN THE ROMANS ANTIQUES

When we turn to the *plaits* and *parlements* of the *romans antiques*, we discover their clear continuities with medieval epic forms. But we can also observe fundamental differences, which are crucially important in distinguishing the *chansons de geste* from the emergent classicizing narratives *en romanz*. Benoît de Sainte-Maure and the anonymous authors of *Thèbes* and *Eneas* locate conciliar debates and trials at the center of court life in their poems, and they delight in dramatizing political controversy.²⁰ Near the beginning of the *Roman de Troie*, when Jason arrives at the palace of King Oëtès in Jaconitès, he finds the king, who is with his barons and vavasours, holding "un grant *plait*" (my emphasis) in the "parleor" with its vaulted arches.²¹ This architectural structure, which appears early in the poem, stands as an emblem for one of the poem's principal interests. The narrative of *Troie* develops largely through the many "parlements" in which counselors debate the proper course of action.

Like Benoît, the *Eneas*-poet also invents an architectural locus for political debate near the beginning of his poem, a structure which may have provided a model for *Troie*. When Eneas arrives in Dido's newly built Carthage, he finds next to her palace, on the right, "li Capitoilles,"

ou fussent par comun esgart
li senator mis por jugier,
por tenir droit, por tort plaissier:
ce fu leus a tenir les *plai*z.

(530-33; my emphasis)²²

(where the senators were put by common consent to judge, to keep the laws, to curb the wrong; this was the place for holding court councils.)

Special ingenuity has been used, the narrator tells us, in designing this building.²³ "Large and beautiful within," it has two hundred vaults and arches. No matter how softly one speaks within it, everyone in the chapter house will hear it. In this "capitoilles," twenty-four senators administer justice.

While the author of the *Roman de Thèbes* offers us no architectural description of a *parleor*, he too gives special importance to royal *plaits* and councils. When Tydeus, having been ambushed by Eteocles' vassals, returns to King Adrastus' court, the poet describes a routine scene: "Li rois estoit en son palés,/ O ses barons tenoit ses *ples*" (the king was in his palace holding his court councils with his barons) (1835–36; my emphasis). Moreover, the role of the king as chief justiciar is symbolically represented on the elegant royal pavilion set up for the battle of Monflor. On it are depicted "les vieilles gestes, les memoires,/ et les justises et *les ples*,/ les jugemenz et les forfés" (the old laws and the customs and the punishments and the trials, the judgments and the infractions) (3180–82; my emphasis).²⁴ As we shall see later in this chapter, the *Thèbes*-poet invents several morally dense, dramatized *parlements* which exemplify the new directions of debate in the *romans antiques*.

The clerkly poets who made the earliest extant classicizing fictions *en roman* developed debate and formal dialogue in ways that are entirely new in medieval vernacular poetry. Public debates assume a novel character, typically raising complex questions about matters of feudal, family, and personal conduct. Frequently, in these debates, the consensus reached by the king's counselors does not resolve the issues raised. Furthermore, the poet often refuses to offer a definitive solution, leaving difficult prudential judgments to the audience. Instead of celebrating accepted values and affirming royal power, debates in the French *romans antiques* open up circumstantial moral questions and draw the audience into the process of judgment. In addition, all three of the early *romanciers* augment public controversy in their narratives with private debates and trials which have to do with matters of the heart. In the pages that follow, I want to examine the novel character and functions of formal debate in the twelfth-century *romans antiques* as these involve public moral decisions. For reasons of emphasis I have reserved discussion of strictly private debate in the form of interior monologues for chapter 3. The *Eneas*-poet and Benoît de Sainte-Maure both invent monologues, modeled on Ovid's *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses*, but also informed by dialectical questioning, in order to explore the question of erotic love. Entering into the hearts and motivations of their heroines and heroes, they invite us to explore in highly nuanced ways the relationships between private affection and public, social

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morality. As we shall see in succeeding chapters, their dialectically organized monologues and the special moral interests attached to them, were to play a key role in the subsequent tradition of the *roman antique*.

COUNCILS IN THE *ROMAN DE THEBES*

The *Roman de Thèbes* is rightly regarded as the most “epic” of the French *romans antiques*. Yet the poet regularly introduces academic modes of moral debate within the context of political councils. Of the seventeen councils in the earliest version of *Thèbes*, only four find their source in Statius’ *Thebaid*.²⁵ Moreover, while two of these deliberations in *Thèbes* are presented as indirect discourse, the other fifteen are dramatized and involve the defense of opposing positions by deliberately individualized speakers.²⁶ The very first of the councils in the *Roman de Thèbes* exemplifies the problematic, morally inquisitory character and effect of *parlements* both in *Thèbes* and in the two other twelfth-century *romans antiques*. By no coincidence, it also draws us as the audience into the dark, circumstantial world of the pagans as the French authors characteristically portray it. In such a world, the full truth of the matter is not easy to discover either for the characters within the poem or for the poem’s audience.

Significantly, the first formal council in *Thèbes* is preceded by an informal, private, dialogical inquisition, as Jocaste challenges Oedipus to tell her who has killed her husband Laius. The private dialogue and the public council form a complementary unit. The outcome of the former, conducted in an elegant, leisurely, intimate setting – in the queen’s court after a delightful supper – powerfully affects the outcome of the latter. Though the episode is a brief one, it draws the audience deeply into complicity with the painful ironies and unresolved private and public moral questions that govern the mood of the poem.

The background for the dialogue and the first council in the *Roman de Thèbes* is spelled out very early in the narrative as the poet presents Queen Jocaste’s (medievalized, social and political) response to the unexpected murder of Laius:

Lasse, dist ele, doulereuse!
Or sui ge veuve sanz seignor,
si n’ai enfant qui gart m’anor.
Se besoingne me sort ou guerre,
ne pourrai pas tenir ma terre. (258–62)

(Alas, she says, sorrowful one! Now I am a widow without a lord, and I do not have a child who protects my fiefdom. If need falls to me in war, I could not hold my land.)

From the beginning, Jocaste's grief has as much to do with her political need as with her personal loss. In this framing, affective context, the poet turns to Oedipus, who, after murdering Laius, has solved the riddle posed by the monstrous Sphinx and then killed him. The people of Thebes, happy to see the end of so evil a "deable," bring the young hero to court, beseeching Jocaste to make a place for him in her household. She agrees, at the same time reminding her subjects of her grief for the loss of her husband.

That very night, after a supper of "mes et daintiez" prepared for her "preuz et cortois" guest, the queen enters into a private trial of Oedipus. She asks whether he knows who has killed her husband and elicits from him his confession of murder. But the "trial" ends with the giving and receiving of "droit" for the crime – a pledge of satisfaction which is, the poet hints, at once feudal and sexual, political and personal. Above all, the outcome of the inquisition involves feminine weakness and erotic passion. As the poet puts it,

Jocaste volentiers le prent,
car fame est tost menee avant,
Qu'en em puet fere son talent. (440-42)

(Jocaste willingly takes [the pledge], for a woman is quickly led on so that one can achieve his desire with her.)

The public council scene that follows on the very next morning serves only to confirm the morally complex, erotic note on which Jocaste's private trial of Oedipus had concluded.

At dawn, a great crowd of counselors gathers in the *tor* to advise the queen. All of them, "grant et petit," speaking as if with a single voice, urge her to marry Oedipus and make him king. Her response has already been anticipated by the sexually suggestive conclusion to her late-night conversation:

mout fu liee si s'esjoï;
bien acreante et bien otroie
que le conseil des barons croie (460-62)

(She was very happy and delighted; she fully approves and fully grants what the council of barons would confirm.)

For the audience, the irony contained but not released in the private trial and public council is clear and discomfiting. The barons advise the queen to wed her husband's murderer and she quickly acquiesces. A brilliant wedding ensues in which "le deul du roi est oubliez" (the sorrow over the king is forgotten) (485). Only the narrator's one-line comment points the

audience to the deep problems in the situation: "cil qui mort l'a est coronnez" (he who killed him [Laius] is crowned) (486). No one but Jocaste, Oedipus, and the medieval audience has access to the knowledge affirmed by the narrator. Private and public motives and knowledge are not brought into accord. The narrative as well as history will proceed on the basis of an unexamined moral dilemma, and the lack of clear, full knowledge or justice at the beginning will issue at last in disaster for all involved. The only saving grace in the darkened, contentious world of the *Roman de Thèbes* – epitomized in the unresolved ironies of the poem's very first council – will be the muted beauty of knightly virtue and aristocratic ceremony as these are practiced within a context of perjury and a bitter civil war waged by two brothers.

Other dramatized councils in *Thèbes* involve the audience in further questions. Has divine vengeance for political sin caused the astonishing death of Amphiaras (5184–374)?²⁷ More importantly, is political perjury the necessary consequence of the strife between the two royal brothers? Two of the longest debate episodes in the poem – both of them invented and dramatized by the French poet – bring into painful focus Theban dilemmas concerning family ties and feudal loyalty to the two sons of Oedipus – Eteocles and Polynices. For their vassals, to insist on loyalty to one royal brother is to betray the other. The question of perjury is the principal subject of the debates and councils structuring the battle over the castle of Monflor (2941–3164; 3739–4036; 4313–506) and the trial of Daire le Roux (7797–978; 8071–146). In both cases, the issue is complicated by the participation of Jocaste, who, as mother and queen, fruitlessly seeks the reconciliation of her sons and peace for Thebes.

THE TRIAL OF DAIRE LE ROUX IN THE *ROMAN DE THEBES*

I turn now to the trial or *plait* of Daire le Roux, though the dramatized debates in the long Monflor episode would prove equally useful in exemplifying the poet's methods and interests.²⁸ In its general form, the story and trial of Daire follow patterns characteristic of the *chansons de geste*. The king accuses his vassal of treason and a public court is held to determine the vassal's guilt. What distinguishes Daire's case from Ganelon's, however, is the complexity of the issues involved.²⁹ Moreover, the case is not directly tied to the history of the poet's audience, but rather to the misty past of ancient Thebes. That is, for the poet and his audience, the case is hypothetical (or fictional) and it is not clear, even at the end, what decision ought, by right, to be made.³⁰

The case is this. Daire le Roux's son, Alexander, newly knighted, has

been taken prisoner by Polynices. Polynices, hoping to use the young knight in his war with his brother, Eteocles, flatters him and sends him as an emissary back to Daire. The young man must ask his father to give Polynices a tower which Eteocles has entrusted to him. In rendering the episode, the poet gives close attention to circumstances. Daire and his wife receive their only son with the greatest love and solicitude. On his return, the mother weeps and kisses him over and over. Daire will pay any sum as ransom for him. When Alexander tells his father that Polynices wants his tower, however, Daire balks. He cannot perform an act of treason even for his son. The issue thus raised, of feudal loyalty, is enormously complicated by the parents' evident love for their child.³¹ Yet, in spite of the human situation, Daire's position is clear – at least at the beginning – governed as it is by a feudal principle: loyalty to one's lord takes precedence over family ties.

Daire's wife, however, enters into the "conseil" between father and son, and she offers different principles. Her son, she declares, must not be killed for the sake of a tower. Furthermore, loyalty to one overlord, Eteocles, has required that Daire break his faith with the other royal brother, Polynices. Here, through a woman's voice, the poet brings up the problem of making and keeping sacred oaths. In the civil war, vassals have had to choose one or the other of the royal brothers and, in doing so, have necessarily perjured themselves. In the face of his wife's correct assessment, Daire can only invoke a principle of circumstantial ethics. If one must choose between two evils, it is better to choose the one that involves the least shame. But then Daire hedges. He is, as the poet tells us, a man who "*de parole fu engingnouz*" (was cunning in speech) (7428). Promising his son that he will do what he can, he sends him back to Polynices with the gift of a gold cup. Daire's "treason," for which Eteocles orders a trial, is precipitated within the context of a dramatized epic council. Eteocles seeks the advice of his barons on an offer of military help. Should he accept what seems to him an attractive proposition?³²

The *plait* or case Daire makes to Eteocles arouses the king's ire. Having advised him not to accept the proffered help, Daire offers the king two pieces of counsel. First, he asks the king to make peace with his brother, and then he accuses him of having forced perjury on his vassals:

Jel di por moi
et pour ces autres que ci voi,
pour noz filz et por noz parenz
dont y a pris plus de cinc cenz;
pris et mors sont par vostre afere,
bien devriez por elz pes fere,

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auques pour eulz et plus por vos,
et pour vostre frere et por nos,
car jurasmes lui sanz engan,
que il avroit l'ennor son an,
et pour nos giter de parjure
Li devez rendre sa droiture.

(7599–610)

(I speak for myself and for the others whom you see here, for our sons and for our relatives of whom more than five hundred have been taken there. They have been taken and killed through your doing. You ought to make peace on their account, for them and more for yourself, for your brother and for us, for we swore to him [Polynices] that he would have the honor during his year, and to keep us from perjury, you ought to render him his right.)

The first of these arguments – in favor of peace – is one the barons of Normandy and England were also urging on King Stephen and Matilda in the 1140s. The second, concerning perjury and the keeping of promises, lies at the very heart of the twelfth-century feudal system. It is also an issue that was to prove thematically crucial, *mutatis mutandis*, in the subsequent history of the *roman antique*.

In the *Thèbes*-poet's fiction, Daire's contention that the king has forced his vassals to perjure themselves, together with his counsel for peace, so enrages Eteocles that he strikes his vassal with a club. Daire takes this violent physical (rather than verbal) response as a breach of faith on his lord's part. He leaves the court, intent on helping Polynices. He will give him access to his *tor* and thereby free his son. In Daire's view, family ties now take precedence over his feudal bond, since his lord has violated his responsibility and shamed his man.

The king's blow and Daire's subsequent act of treason draw us deeply and concretely into specific questions of feudal responsibility. Moreover, these are questions the poet will pursue (without resolving them) through Daire's trial for treason. Does a king break faith when he strikes a vassal? Is Daire justified in handing over a tower which the king has placed in his trust, or is his action treasonable?

In the event, Daire's act of "treachery" issues in failure. One of Eteocles' engineers suggests that the tower be undermined.³³ He burrows under the foundation, sets fire to the *tor*'s supports, and the tower begins to crack. Polynices' men, warned by the engineer, escape, and Eteocles accuses Daire of treason, demanding his immediate death. Daire acknowledges that Eteocles has the power to kill him: "la vostre force est ore maire" (your strength is now greater) (7770). But then, in front of "la cort grant et plenièr" (the full court) (7783), he uses rhetorical argument to defend himself, to explain that the king had invited his alleged treachery by striking him. Nor does he bow his head or ask Eteocles' pardon "car bien connoist sa felonnie" (7786).

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What we witness here, and in the next several speeches, is the triumph of verbal argument and juridical form over physical force, and the poet seems to be emphasizing this displacement. The king, full of anger, wants immediate physical revenge. Othon, who will become Daire's champion in the trial, steps forward and says to the king:

Fai le jugier premierement
et demener par jugement. (7793-94)

(Have the judgment first and then act accordingly.)

This call to a rational, rhetorically based *jugement* seems designed specifically to exemplify the power of words and curial procedures to mollify, transcend, or control instinctive, passionate behavior.

Though Eteocles by no means wants a trial, his barons force him to it. The narrator gives us a full, circumstantial account of their concern for Daire and the stratagems they devise in the hope of gaining his acquittal:

Hors de la sale vont as estres,
et ont fet ouvrir les fenestres;
jus s'assieent el pavement
si parolent du jugement (7813-16)

(Outside the hall, they go to the window seats and have the windows opened. They sit down on the floor and speak about the judgment.)

Their first hope – to postpone the trial a day and thereby allow Eteocles to cool down – fails. The trial must begin immediately and so it does.

A number of features make Daire's trial different from those of the *chansons de geste*. In the first place, as we have already seen, there is a problematic issue of feudal ethics involved: Was the king's physical blow a breach of faith which released Daire from his oath? Secondly, most of the arguments made in court are based not on the oral, formulaic rhetoric of the *chansons de geste* and ancient customary law but derive rather from an academic, clerkly context and involve carefully individualized speakers.³⁴ Finally, in the trial episode, the *Thèbes*-poet never resolves the issues raised in the *plait*, leaving them to the audience for adjudication. At the point when, in the epic tradition, a judicial duel might determine the issue of guilt, the author introduces a "private" argument made by a woman:

Tandis com il de droit contendent
et cil de la cort les atendent,
Jocaste parole o le roi,
tout belement et en croci. (7979-82)

(While they argue about the law and those of the court listen to them, Jocaste speaks with the king, gracefully and in secret.)

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In fact, hers will be the argument, together with Antigone's, rather than law or strict justice, that will settle the case. Jocaste argues a moral principle which we may assume held considerable importance in mid-twelfth-century Norman academic discourse, since it also governs other poems, including the *Roman d'Eneas*: "mieux valt mesure/ que jugemenz ne que droiture" (measure is worth more than judgment or law) (7983-84). In this case, a woman puts forward a classical value-system beyond the realm of twelfth-century customary legal practice. Moreover, she points to the consequences likely to flow from a strict administration of justice: "Cest felon a droit destruiroies,/ mes mout grant donmage y aroies" (you would destroy this criminal by right of law, but you would have great sorrow on account of it) (7985-86).

As if to emphasize the influence of women on the trial's conclusion, while Jocaste is speaking, Eteocles' sister, Antigone, approaches them, bringing with her Daire's very beautiful daughter, Salemandre. At this point, the narrator introduces his own voice into the argument in a direct address to the audience: "Savez quele est la fille Daire?" (Do you know what [sort of person] Daire's daughter is?) (7999). He then proceeds to describe Daire's daughter at length in the academic high style which has come to be associated with courtly medieval romance in general. Eteocles, we learn, is in love with Salemandre, but she has scorned him up until this moment. Now Jocaste identifies for her son a new sort of law, one based on beauty and *cortoisie* rather than the customary law of the epic tradition:

Filz, fet ele, n'as droit en toi
ne n'as droit en chevalrie
se de ceste ne fes t'amie.
Veis onques tant bele chose,
ne flor de lis ne flor de rose? (8034-38)

("Son," she says, "you do not have justice in you, nor do you have the law of chivalry, if you do not make this [young woman] your beloved. Have you ever seen such a beautiful thing, whether a lily or a rose [as beautiful as she is]?")

As if to stress the feminine character of this new "law," the two young women come weeping before the king, kneel down "doucement," "as piez le roi el pavement" (softly, on the floor at the king's feet). The "bachelor," "soudier," and "gentilz houme," whose "pitié" has been aroused for the maiden, now also seek "merci" for Daire.

That the poet designed Daire's trial to juxtapose two value-systems, two kinds of law and judgment, is made clear in the dialogue that concludes the episode. Creon, the proponent of the old ancestral law (and of customary epic values), mocks Eteocles for his acquittal of Daire because of a woman.

Othon, Daire's champion, responds, "Si vet d'amie,/ d'amors et de chevalerie;/ se le tenez a vilannie,/ nous le tenons a cortoisie" (This concerns friendship, love and chivalry; if you consider it base, we consider it courtly) (8111-14).

One might well argue that Daire's trial as a whole does not deviate very far from the *plaits* of the epic tradition. Except for the concluding judgment, which involves love "a cortoisie" and *pitié*, it may not seem to presage new directions in narrative. In certain respects this is a just assessment. Daire, like Ganelon, is accused of treason, a crime that requires a royal *plait*. Yet the circumstantial manner in which the trial is presented and dramatized marks a decisive break with the *chansons de geste*. The trial in *Thèbes* turns on several issues, while Ganelon's trial in the *Roland*, complex though it is, turns on a single issue. Moreover, it brings up questions that are deliberative, in rhetorical terms, as well as forensic. What are the lord's responsibilities to his vassals? What constitutes a breath of faith? Daire's trial becomes an arena for considering in a hypothetical, fictive way specific questions of moral value of utmost importance in the context of twelfth-century feudal life.

The councils and judgments that structure epic typically belong to a poetry of political statement and commemoration. By contrast, Daire's trial has as its primary function the raising of questions that are "doubtful," to use Quintilian's term. As we have seen, formal debate, followed by judgment, yields a new and unexpected "law." The "droit en chevalerie" which Othon holds does not belong to a judicial code. Yet, the poet proposes it through Daire's trial, perhaps as a civilizing, humanizing corrective to the harsher customary justice of earlier medieval royal and baronial courts.³⁵

In addition, the unpredictable outcome of the trial points to two different aspects of the *roman antique* as an emergent literary form. The first of these is one often remarked, namely, the introduction of a love interest and of feminine influence and power at court; the second has to do with the structural characteristics of the trial as a whole. Both the dramatized arguments and the trial's conclusion participate in a world of chance, change, and surprise, and involve the affective lives of individuals, perennially opening out to the unknown and inconclusive. If we are watching in *Thèbes* the emergence of courtly classicizing romance, we must see in Daire's trial and its outcome an epitome of new directions. The intervention of the unexpected by means of rhetorical debate and dialogue generates a centrifugal movement away from hierarchy, certainty, and finality. Each surprising, unexpected speech opens the way for further debate, new questions, and unpredictable or doubtful judgments.

CONCILIAR DEBATE IN THE *ROMAN DE TROIE*

When we turn to Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie*, we discover an interest in *parlements*, *plaits*, and *quaestiones* paralleling that in *Thèbes* but considerably more extensive and experimental. Benoît exploits both the epic structure of the public council and the academic *quaestio* of the medieval arts curriculum in formulating his pagan characters' political debates. Though the *Roman de Troie* probably follows the *Eneas* in order of composition, Benoît's treatment of public dialectical forms links his poem directly to *Thèbes*. There are, in *Troie*, thirty-one formal councils as well as several other council-like situations, including the introductory public exchange between Peleus and Jason, fraught with hidden motives and misunderstanding, and the fateful debate about the Palladium near the poem's end. There are also six political embassies involving a number of direct, formal speeches invented by the poet.³⁶ While Benoît took his outline for the debates in many cases from Dares and Dictys, he regularly turns the spare descriptions of parliaments – usually reported in his Latin sources as indirect discourse – into full, dramatized debates on difficult, circumstantial political issues. These debates, which often bring public questions into conjunction with personal desire and persuasive rhetoric, frequently conclude in wrong decisions on the council's part. Again and again, Benoît shows how elegantly shaped persuasive arguments mask selfish private motives or bad judgment and thereby coincide with the workings of malignant fortune.

To be sure, as we have seen, the *chansons de geste* provided the twelfth-century *romanciers* with a precedent for direct public oratory as a principal mode of presentation. Yet Benoît, like the *Thèbes*-poet, develops his oratory in new, hypothetical and circumstantial directions. He also focuses considerable attention on the mixed, frequently incorrect responses of the pagan audience to the various kinds of argument presented.³⁷ As *Troie*'s narrator is quick to assert, a wrong judgment leads to the fall of Troy. Fortune may be the ultimate cause of this fall, yet its more specific catalyst is the Trojans' acceptance of Paris' "visionary" argument and their rejection of dire (true) prophecies forcefully delivered by Helenus, Panthus, and Cassandre.

We must begin with the context for Benoît's debates – the narrative situation that encourages uncertainty as to the right or proper judgment in all of the councils. While the *chansons de geste* typically celebrate the good emperor or leader as the custodian of well-known, accepted political values and denounce his (usually pagan) evil counterpart, the *Roman de Troie*

presents us with an unfamiliar, ancient situation in which neither side is wholly right or wholly wrong. Each side accuses the other of wrongdoing; each has shamed the other. Moreover, both sides aim, at least through some of their most eloquent partisans, to use *sen* (unenlightened by Christian revelation) in conducting their *parlements* and directing the war. While the Greeks, and particularly Agamemnon, appear more reasonable, less given to passion than the Trojans, neither side is free from blame. Nor is either side possessed of absolute, omniscient understanding in the matter of the war.

For the most part, the questions being explored are the same as those of the *chansons de geste* – questions of shame and honor, political and moral right and wrong, prudence and folly in secular conduct. Yet the context as well as the structure and content of the *parlements* themselves obviate the possibility of clear, certain adjudication on some of the most important issues. Because the details of the Troy story are little known to most of his twelfth-century audience (who are not versed in Latin literature), Benoît is not bound by prior expectations. He is therefore free to invent and embellish for his own purposes. In particular, in the debates, as he develops mere suggestions from Dares, he introduces many new, individualized voices into the argument. And these voices have the effect of questioning as well as shaping the direction of the narrative. Dramatized arguments illustrate the poet's implicit contention that misguided or devious rhetorical speeches and audience misunderstanding as much as destiny lead to the tragic fall of Troy.

The two debates in the *Roman de Troie* to which I want to direct attention involve the famous Judgment of Paris. This well-known mythological episode, as Benoît develops it, bears importantly on the character of *plaits* and questions in his poem. Not only does Paris' dream of the three goddesses and the golden apple involve a *jugement*; his visionary experience also becomes a basis in *Troie* for the royal parliament's decision to precipitate a war. Benoît expands two closely related conciliar debates from three paragraphs in Dares to nearly five hundred lines of poetry (lines 3651–4131). In constructing the two councils, the French poet's major contribution is the invention of individualized dramatic *personae* and long speeches for the key participants. In the councils we are about to examine, only about one-sixth of the lines are devoted to third-person narrative links, while five-sixths are direct speech. The subject of the debates is, for Benoît, as much the motives of the speakers (whether hidden or explicit) and the power of persuasive rhetoric as it is the question of war. Most importantly for our purposes, in the debates the poet juxtaposes customary, formulaic political argument with styles of discourse and kinds of

argumentation foreign to the medieval vernacular epic tradition. As the speakers, their motivations, and their kinds of argument multiply, so too do the problems of interpretation for the audiences both fictional and actual. In his treatment of these councils, Benoît draws us into the interior of the scene, involving us in the Trojans' dilemma as we listen to the various dramatized arguments for and against the war, for and against the theft of Menelaus' wife, Helen. But the poet also frames the debates by a moralizing, distanced commentary. Because of a wrong interpretation, Benoît tells us, closing the debate in his philosophical voice, "furent tuit a eissil" (all were destroyed) (4026).

The context for the two royal councils we are considering is a volatile one. Priam, whose father, Laodemon, has been killed by the Greeks and his sister kidnapped, has sent Antenor to demand his sister's return. The Greeks have refused his request. Angry, concerned about his honor, the king seeks his sons' and vassals' approval for war. Priam's first, small council with "ses homes et ses fiz" (3658) begins straightforwardly enough. The king speaks first, invoking well-known epic values. The Greeks have shamed the Trojans. War will be a medicine against the anger occasioned by this shame. The response of Priam's council is, as in the epic tradition, unanimous and formulaic:

N'i a un sol qui l'en desdie;
Chascuns li pramet e afie
Qu'il en feront tot son voleir
A lor force e a lor poëir. (3717-20)

(There is no one who disagrees. Everyone promises and vows that they will do his whole will with their strength and with their power.)

Priam is pleased and sets about organizing his army. Hector, his oldest son, is given the position of chief. He vows support for his father's course, but, following Dares' outline, he introduces a note of caution. Hector's speech, invented by Benoît, is not a formulaic recital of customary principles in the epic tradition. Instead, the newly appointed leader considers the risks involved in terms that are by turns classical and popular. First, he establishes the bases for his argument. He asserts as axiomatic that one must not begin what one cannot bring to an end. This is a theme with Horatian resonances. Just as Benoît, following Horace's *Art of Poetry*, concerns himself with arranging the beginning and middle of his poem in order to arrive at a just and proportionate end, so Hector applies a Horatian sense of appropriate form to the matter of war. In addition, he recalls the proverb of "li vilains" which says: "Mieuz vient laisssier/ Que mauvairement comencier" (It's better to desist than to begin badly) (3807-8). Within this

sententious, academic framework, supported by a folk proverb, Hector analyzes the superior military strength of the Greeks. In sum, though he wants to defend Priam and Trojan honor, he has prudent reservations.

The council's immediate reaction to Hector's argument is praise. They approve his caution and his prudence in worrying about the strength of the Greeks. Hector has raised reasonable questions about the action being considered and he implicitly challenges his father's wishes. Benoît's narrator, however, does not record the specific comments of "li plusor d'eus e li auquant" who speak "en plusors sens" (many of them . . . with many opinions) (3842-43). Instead he turns to Paris' argument in favor of aggressive action. His is an argument which differs remarkably from Hector's, not only in its conclusion but also in its motivation and character.

Paris begins by speaking in support of the war, urging the "riche" and "vaillant" people of Troy to seek vengeance against the Greeks. Then, as a means of lending authority to his contention, he invokes an "avision" he has had. By means of a vision, he argues, the gods have given assurance of honor for the Trojans. In "translating" Dares' brief account of Paris' vision, Benoît has his Paris develop the experience into a formal literary dream.³⁸ As the poet inserts the dream-judgment within the framework of a political *parlement*, he juxtaposes two very different kinds of question and two systems of value. His dream, as Paris reports it, has an air of unreality about it. This, we recognize, is the kind of discourse we have come to associate with "romance" in a specific, limited sense as fantasy and "errance."³⁹ Moreover, the central issues of Paris' judgment are the goddesses' vanity over their relative beauty and Paris' desire for a beautiful woman, neither of them subjects appropriate for epic consideration.

First of all, Paris amplifies his experience by framing it with the topos of spring. The time is the calends of May and the day is warm. The young Trojan has lost his huntsmen and dogs. Beside a spring, next to a juniper tree, he falls asleep and dreams that Mercury has brought Juno, Venus, and Minerva before him.⁴⁰ A golden apple thrown into the midst of the three goddesses has raised a *content* or argument as to which of them is the most beautiful. Paris must decide the question and award the apple.

In most classical and medieval accounts of the myth, to one or another of which Benoît may well have looked in amplifying Dares, each of the goddesses comes secretly in turn to Paris to offer him a bribe. Juno promises great possessions; Minerva, military prowess or power; and Venus, a beautiful woman. We might well expect Paris to recount the whole story of the three bribes, if only to give the Trojan council the opportunity to understand and interpret his entire visionary experience and his judgment for themselves. In fact, however, as Paris shapes his

argument, the rhetoric of private desire subverts logic and the public concerns of the council. Paris says nothing of the offers made by Juno and Minerva, though either of their gifts would have held great promise for the Trojans' political and military aspirations. Instead, he mentions only the bribe he has accepted, Venus' proffered gift of the "Femme de Grece . . . La plus preissee qu'i sereit" (the woman of Greece, the most highly prized that might be there) (3915-16). On the basis of Venus' favor, then, Paris offers to make an expedition to Greece.

But what is Benoît's purpose in thus elaborating the situation of the dream? It would appear, in the light of the larger debate, that he wants to identify the basis for Paris' argument as belonging to an order of reality different from that of fact or rational analysis. Moreover, Paris, in offering his own "reading" of his vision – that Venus, whom he has favored in his judgment, will now favor the Trojans – calls attention to the problem of interpreting dreams as well as using them in making public, political decisions.

Paris' omission serves an important strategic purpose in the debate, one, it would seem, that Benoît fully intended. Although Paris bases the persuasive force of his argument on the "text" of his visionary judgment, he reports only part of that text to his audience for *their* adjudication. In addition, Paris himself, whether intentionally or unintentionally, misunderstands or misconstrues the meaning of his judgment. He leaps from his vision and Venus' promise of a beautiful woman to a large, mistaken conclusion. Not only Venus, he argues, but also "li deu en vuelent nostre honor" (the gods want our honor in this) (3858).

As significant, unexamined omissions and distortions of this kind accumulate in Priam's council, we might anticipate correction or logical appraisal either from the group of advisors gathered to advise Priam or from the poet. But the debate continues without such assessment. No direct invocation of *droit sen* counters the would-be lover's vision. Benoît allows no one the chance to respond to the dream-experience before Deiphebus hurries to approve Paris' argument. At the same time, however, the poet introduces another voice into the debate. As if to accentuate the difficulty of interpreting dreams and using them in argumentation, Benoît makes his next speaker the prophet, Helenus. Helenus does not attempt to dissect or analyze Paris' vision or his argument. Instead, he offers an alternative kind of visionary experience. In Dares, Helenus is not a prophet, but merely predicts the consequences likely to follow from Paris' marriage to a Greek woman. In Benoît, by contrast, Helenus bases his argument on three visions of his own. To establish the authority of *his* visions, he points to his unimpeachable track record for true prophecies.⁴¹

In Benoît's shaping of the debate, the council's first response to Helenus is silence: "Tuit furent a la cort taisant,/ Onc n'i parla petit ne grant" (All in the court were silent, nor did anyone speak, whether low or high in status) (3985–86). Then, however, Troilus rises and calls Helenus a coward: "Proveire," he declares, "sont toz jorz coart" (Priests are always cowards) (4001). This attack *ad hominem* brings the debate to an end. A judgment is rendered in favor of Troilus' speech supporting Paris. "'Mout a bien dit,' ço dient tuit" (He has spoken very well, this everyone says) (4020). This apparent unanimity, however, is, as we have seen, based on skillful persuasion, not on a close, reasoned analysis of the competing evidence or the relative authority of the speakers as interpreters of dreams.

As Benoît records the final moment in the debate – the council's judgment – he underscores the lack of clear truth in the decision made:

Por les paroles Heleni,
O ait veir dit o ait menti,
Ne remaigne. (4023–25; my emphasis)

([Paris] should not hold back on account of Helenus' words, whether he has told the truth or lied.)

These lines serve to emphasize the Trojan's egregious preference for rhetorical persuasion and consensus over close, reasoned consideration and analysis. The distanced, clerkly narrator very briefly points the way to a different judgment, beyond the drama of the ancient debate, as he corroborates the prophet Helenus' dire warning and indicates that Paris' dream, wrongly interpreted, will lead to disaster: "Por ço," he declares, "furent tuit a eissil" (on account of this they were all destroyed) (4026).

This same tendency to ignore reason and common sense in favor of flawed but persuasive argument also animates the very next, larger council. Once Priam has gained approval for war from his elite advisors – his sons and most honored vassals – he calls a general *parlement* to announce his plan and seek further support. Explaining that he wants to send Paris to seek vengeance on the Greeks, he nonetheless gives his council power to change his mind:

Quar, se vos plaist, il i ira,
E se vos plaist, il remandra. (4071–72)

(For, if it pleases you, he will go there, and if it pleases you, he will stay.)

This principle of consensus, the dramatized parliaments show, often leads to wrong decisions, based on prejudice and self-interest. The unheeded advice of true prophets within the debate, as well as the narrator's commentary, encourage the audience to take positions different from those of the king's counselors.

Plaits, debates, and judgments

The first of the speakers in Priam's second debate, Panthus, adds to the arguments opposing the theft of Helen and war. In Dares, Panthus' speech is reported in two sentences. He had heard from his father that "if Alexander brought home a wife from Greece, Troy would utterly fall. It was much better . . . to spend one's life in peace than to risk the loss of liberty in war" (139-40). Not only does Benoît turn this outline into a speech of nearly forty lines; he also makes Panthus' information about Troy's destruction prophetic.

Benoît first characterizes Panthus in order to establish his authority. He is "uns vassaus mout senez,/ De letres sages e fondez" (a very prudent vassal, wise in Latin learning) (4078-79). That is, he, like the poet himself, is trained in the liberal arts. Moreover, his own authority is reinforced by his father's. Euphorbius, who had lived to be more than 360 years old, "Mout ot grant sen e grant clergie./ Des arz e del conseil devin/ Esteient tuit a lui aclin" (had very great wisdom and great learning. The arts and divine counsel were all subject to him) (4092-94). With the weight of learning in the arts and access to divine privity, Euphorbius had often told Panthus that Troy would be lost if Paris took a wife from Greece. And so Panthus issues his warning:

Por çol te di, se il i vait
E de la prenge femme e ait,
La prophecie averera
Que mis pere prophetiza. (4101-4)

(Therefore I tell you, if he goes there and takes and has the woman, the prophecy my father prophesied will prove true.)

He also counsels peace: "Mieuz te vient tot ensi ester/ E ton bon regne en pais garder/ Qu'estre en tomoute e en esfrei/ Que n'en chiee li maus sor tei" (It would be better for you thus to do nothing and keep your good kingdom in peace than to be in tumult and distress so that the evil of it may not fall on you) (4107-10).

Yet, in spite of Panthus' credentials and his father's, Priam's councillors "contredistrent" the "autorité" that he "ot dit e mostré." Benoît uses Panthus' speech to illustrate how the Trojans have ignored learning and prophecy to their own peril. The narrator comments: "N'en firent rien, n'en orent cure;/ Bien i ert lor mesaventure" (They would not do anything. They did not pay attention. Certainly in this was their misadventure) (4123-24).

There is an obvious and strict analogy between a learned, cautionary speech such as Panthus' and the whole of Benoît's poem, which contains its own cautionary, academically based argument. His audience, unlike

Priam's council, has the advantage of distance. But, like Priam's council, they must make their own prudential judgments as to the wisdom of the characters' dramatized arguments and decisions. Moreover, they must recognize the wisdom of Benoît, the *auctor*, if they are to use the poem's moral lessons, often indirectly presented, in ordering their own political and private lives.

In the two *parlements* I have just described, Paris' dream-vision and his rhetoric outweigh the prophets' arguments. Furthermore, his attraction to Venus' gift of a beautiful Greek woman affects his political judgment. In each of the love affairs Benoît develops in his poem, this conflict between private and public life likewise informs and distorts the epic action. I use the verb *distort* because, as we shall see in the next chapter, Benoît consistently juxtaposes public, epic values against the divisive and devious forces of foolish love.⁴² The councils we have been examining in the *Roman de Troie*, in which private motives inform public arguments, exemplify in microcosm a major structuring principle of the new classicizing narratives *en roman*. Within the forms of dramatized debate as the poet develops them, the several voices of the speakers hold a number of different rhetorical "intentions" in suspension. The interplay of motives, moral issues, and styles of debate developed through a congeries of persuasive arguments produces highly complex human situations, often fraught with unresolved dramatic, moral, and/or situational irony.

In addition, as we saw in chapter 1, the poet has his own arguments to make through his narrating "I" and the network of authorial perspectives he projects to frame and re-present the ancient story. His attitudes, usually expressed through narrative commentary, carry us beyond the characters with their *parlements* and *plaits* into the arenas of moral philosophy and rhetorical composition. In an important sense, Benoît's entire poem may be viewed as a complex of causes or arguments, both public and private. Again and again, the audience are called upon to judge the moral actions of the pagan characters in a variety of specific (and, for them, hypothetical) situations.⁴³ Their final judgment will encompass the largest questions about human conduct and ethical value: public honor and reputation *versus* private passionate love; the roles of prudence, reason, and rhetoric in the rule of nations and the making of history; the place of Fortune; the changeable character of women; the transient nature of the world's goods. These questions, as they are presented in *Troie*, bear precisely and specifically on *secular* aristocratic life. The poem as a whole invites its public to examine those values which are especially appropriate to the good moral life of medieval rulers.

Plaits, debates, and judgments

CONCILIAR ORATORY IN THE ROMAN D'ENEAS

I have largely saved the subject of *plaits* and *judgements* in the *Roman d'Eneas* for the next chapter because the *Eneas*-poet ties his sophisticated manipulations of debate principally to the issue of erotic and political love, which is the subject of chapter 3. In this regard, the seven recorded or dramatized public councils in the *Eneas* are less important to the poem's principal concern – legitimate royal love and marriage – than they are in *Thèbes* or *Troie*.⁴⁴ It is worth noting, however, that the *Eneas*-poet does develop one of the poem's most important secondary questions – the issue of making and breaking feudal promises – through the several political orations he invents for Turnus. Far more fully than Virgil, he explores the legitimacy of Turnus' claims to Lavine and the inheritance of her lands, and he does so in the context of dramatized feudal councils. How, the poem asks, through Turnus' several conciliar orations, can a foreigner like Eneas legitimately inherit both a kingdom and a royal princess?

In the *Aeneid*, Virgil had insisted from the start that Turnus was in the wrong, representing destructive passion, while King Latinus was right to favor Aeneas as his heir, partly because the gods supported the Trojan. The *Eneas*-poet, by contrast, makes the issue of Latinus' feudal promises to Turnus a valid problem as he invents several long speeches for him. The case Turnus makes is always the same (3823–63; 4115–82; 7733–84). It turns primarily on his *droit*, based on Latinus' solemn promise to him of his daughter and his lands. Turnus, we learn from his direct testimony, has already taken possession of his land, together with its castles, towers, and dungeons, and he has received homage from his barons.

Thus, for example, Turnus presents his case to the aristocratic leaders of his force:

Li rois Latins est anciens,
molt est vialz hon et de lonc tens
e ne puet mes tenir son regne;
sa fille m'a donee a fene
et sa terre tot ansemant,
sanz nul autre retenement;
otroie l'ont tuit li baron;
il n'a chastel, tor ne donjon
dont il ne m'a pieca saisi;
an ma garde ai tot recoilli,
les homages des barons pris
et mes gardes es chastiaus mis. (4127–38)

(King Latinus is old, a very old man with many years, and he can no longer rule his kingdom. He has given his daughter to me as wife and his land in its entirety without

anything held back. All the barons have granted it to me. There is neither a castle nor a tower nor a stronghold with which he has not invested me long ago. I have gathered everything under my protection, accepted the barons' homage, and put my officers in the castles.)

In this oration, as in other speeches entirely invented by the *Eneas*-poet, Turnus presents a case that has considerable justice. His arguments raise legitimate questions about the keeping of feudal promises. Moreover, because the young, noble warrior delivers his *plait* directly and with eloquence, the audience are drawn into the act of adjudicating his cause. Right up until the poem's end – when Turnus enters into single combat with Eneas – we are made to participate in judging the *droit* Turnus has claimed for himself.

The question raised through Turnus in the *Eneas* is a subtle one, which would almost certainly have led to interpretive debate among the poem's first listeners. The answer the poet implicitly proposes through the form of his composition is ingenious. It involves the balancing of Turnus' narrowly political claims against the more powerful claim of passionate but legitimate love as I shall show in the next chapter. The argument of the *Roman d'Eneas*, like the arguments of *Thèbes* and *Troie*, is rather poetic than legalistic. Like the other authors of the French *romans antiques*, the *Eneas*-poet asks his audience to rethink their own values not so much by describing as by dramatizing the deeply felt, ethically oriented dilemmas of his ancient pagan characters.

As we shall see later in this study, Boccaccio and Chaucer will also give central importance to dramatized debate in order to raise their own moral questions. The last book of Boccaccio's *Teseida* actually begins with a long *piato*. This council – with Teseo's key speech on necessity, honor, and fame – resolves the *quaestiones* raised by and through Palemone and Arcita's anguished debates about love earlier in the poem. Teseo's discourses in the concluding council, moreover, belong to a whole series of ducal orations in the poem, all of which Boccaccio has designed to explore and exemplify a neo-Aristotelian value-system suitable for princes. Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* likewise concludes with Theseus' conciliar oration; but the English poet raises more difficult philosophical questions about love and the power of princely virtue than Boccaccio had, giving the questions special poignancy by assigning them mainly to his young protagonists. "What is this world," Arcite asks on his death bed, "What asketh men to have?" (l. 2777) "What governance is in this precience,/ That giltelees tormenteth innocence?" (l. 1313–14) Palamon demands in a rhetorical question that nonetheless cries out for an answer, both in the poem's world and ours.

The whole of Boccaccio's *Filostrato* turns both ostensibly and actually on a *questione d'amore* posed in the poem's prologal epistle. Though the question belongs in the first instance to a playful court of love, it assumes moral depth as it is asked in relation to Criseida's betrayal of her lover Troiolo. In addition Boccaccio uses the crucial council in which the Greeks decide to trade Criseida for Antenor to explore the nature and effects of duplicitous oratory. The speech he invents for Calcas, designed for "pietoso effetto," enables the action that leads to Troiolo's tragic loss. In Chaucer's *Troilus*, questions, persuasive but duplicitous arguments, and parliaments assume a still greater role than they had in the *Filostrato*. In Book I, Troilus, alone in his chamber, makes "argumentes" about his love for Criseyde, focusing them on his wished-for conclusion "that she of him wolde han compassioun." Pandarus' "proces" or rhetorical case controls Book II as he leads his niece by a series of persuasive arguments towards his own and Troilus' very specific "ende."⁴⁵ He also rings out his trumped-up "proces" against Polifete "like a bell." In the same book, Criseyde "argues in her thought" about whether to love Troilus. In Book IV, where the word *parlement* appears more often than in any other single work of Chaucer's, the poet interweaves public conciliar discussions concerning the exchange of prisoners with Pandarus' private arguments to Troilus about the remedies for love.⁴⁶ In addition, Troilus, "disputyng with hymself," debates the "argumentes" of the "grete clerkes" on the metaphysical question of predestination.

Yet, in *Troilus*, neither the two lovers' private arguments and inner *disputyng*, nor Pandarus' *proces*, nor the political *parlements* issue in the discovery of *droit sen* by the pagan characters, about either their loves or their lives. As the narrator observes of the council's decision to exchange Antenor and Thoas for Criseyde, a "cloud of errour" hides from the Trojans the fact that the exchange will lead to their ruin. Troilus, unmoved by Pandarus' Ovidian arguments, clings desperately to his love. And, though he considers the problem of predestination and free will at considerable length, he arrives at no clear conclusion (953-1078). In both *Troilus* and the *Knight's Tale*, Chaucer greatly complicates the interrogatory character of his poems both by the *kinds* of question he has his characters raise and by the highly individualized forms through which they argue. Not only does he implicate the most difficult of contemporary theological issues – the suffering of the innocent, the nature of mortal human life, the role of predestination – in his narrative texture; he also takes up the question of foolish love in a way that is radically new in the tradition of the *roman antique*. As we shall see, French and Italian writers in the tradition

Chaucer and the *roman antique*

limit their explorations to a strictly secular, moral contrast between *fole amor* and legitimate marriage, private passion and public responsibility. Chaucer, by contrast, gives a philosophically and spiritually provocative turn to the question. In his broad exploration and dramatization of foolish love, he includes attachments to all earthly goods as these oppose, but also initiate a yearning for, a stable love that has no end.

The poetics of *fine amor* in the French *romans antiques*

No one can doubt that the “love interest” in the twelfth-century *romans antiques* is one of their most important and innovative features. The treatment of erotic love in the *Roman d’Eneas* and the *Roman de Troie* sharply distinguishes them from the *chansons de geste* as well as the lyric *cansos* of the same period. The *Eneas*-poet and Benoît de Sainte-Maure were the first medieval vernacular writers to pose urgent, practical questions about the place of sexual love in a highly structured, politically ambitious aristocracy. The French poets’ dramatizations of love both enact “un art d’aimer,” as Jean Frappier suggested,¹ and, as I argue in this chapter, explore the ethical significance of private love in relation to public, moral life and historical narrative consequences. Several scholars have described the behavior typical of young lovers in the northern French romances of antiquity, and we are especially indebted to Edmond Faral for demonstrating their dependence on Ovid’s love poems.²

Yet considerable confusion remains as to the narrative and ethical functions of the love interest in the first extended classicizing fictions *en roman*. In what terms and for what purpose does the *Eneas*-poet distinguish between Eneas’ relationship with Dido and his love for Lavine? Does Benoît de Sainte-Maure celebrate *fine amor* as an independent, positive system of behavior in his *Roman de Troie*, as Alfred Adler once argued, even as he laments its defeat by *militia*?³ Is he principally interested in the psychological plight of characters “caught between love and death, honor and desire”?⁴ Or does he guide his audience to condemn extra- and pre-marital love affairs as tragic because they are both politically and personally destructive?⁵ Scholars who easily trace the *matière* of love in the French *romans antiques* to Ovid – the sighs, the insomnia, the lyric lamentations, the tears, the stratagems of lovers – have had much greater difficulty with its *sen* or significance. Yet it was not only the Ovidian *matière* of love but also a distinctive set of moral and political questions *about* such love that the authors of the early *romans antiques* bequeathed to subsequent poets writing in the same tradition.

Jean Frappier has provided one key guideline for distinguishing the poetics of love in the French *romans antiques*. Building in part on the work of Moshé Lazar, he separates northern *amour courtois* from the *fine amor* of the southern troubadours.⁶ “Cet autre ‘amour courtois,’” he writes,

ne gravite pas exactement dans le même orbite que la *fin’amor* [of the troubadours]. Il tend à se concilier avec la morale traditionnelle, à préserver les exigences de la loi sociale et de la religion . . . Hostiles en général à l’union libre comme aux amours adultères, nos romanciers courtois préconisent volontiers le mariage d’amour.⁷

In this chapter, I want to explore more specifically than Frappier and others have done the narrative functions and moral contours of the northern classicizing romancers’ treatments of love.

To sharpen our understanding, I examine the treatments of *fine amor* in the *romans antiques* in relation both to Ovid’s love poems and to the lessons on them poets would have been likely to encounter in the classroom. Ovid’s poems seldom appeared in medieval school manuscripts without explanatory glosses.⁸ Yet scholars have not generally wondered whether the twelfth-century authors of the *romans antiques* might not have used *both* the poetry *and* the commentaries as they explored the moral and political problem of secular love in their fictions. As I suggest in this chapter, both the *Eneas*-poet and Benoît, in different but complementary ways, dramatize attitudes towards love that have clear parallels in contemporary commentaries. While the lessons of the glossators in the grammar-school textbooks are pedantic and static, they assume powerful situational life in the poetry. Carefully orchestrated, lyrical dramas of young love stir the imagination even as they demand subtle moral judgments of the kind students would have been required to make in the medieval classroom.

The dominant interests in school commentaries on Ovid’s love poems – and in the classicizing romances influenced by them – are political, social, and moral, but they are not typically religious. Neither the medieval commentaries nor the French *romans antiques* deal with worldly attachment *versus* spiritual love.⁹ Nor do they celebrate an amoral code of “courtly love,” one that makes adultery a central, positive element in a “religion of love.”¹⁰ Instead, they focus on the question of illicit (or foolish) *versus* chaste married love.¹¹ The most basic school commentaries on Ovid’s love poems, together with the influential *Eneas* and *Roman de Troie*, seem to have provided the foundation for an ethical poetics of secular love that helped to shape all later poems in the tradition of the *roman antique*. This is not to say that all treatments of love in the tradition can be reduced to a single moral or doctrinal formulation. Poets contextualized received teaching in a wide

The poetics of *fine amor*

variety of ways, sometimes within the same poem. Yet a relatively homogeneous core of moral, social, and/or political attitudes towards love and marriage informs both school commentaries on Ovid's love poetry and later-medieval classicizing fictions concerned with secular love. Clearly, writers within this tradition also responded directly to Ovid's love poems, and some of them, including Chaucer, extended their explorations into the higher realms of Christian devotion and theology. But they seem always to owe a primary debt to Ovid's amatory works as these were explicated by medieval schoolteachers.¹²

As we shall see in the pages that follow, the French romancers' adaptations of Ovid – and especially his *Heroides* – were decisive in shaping the direction of the *roman antique* for subsequent writers. Ovid's epistles, mainly spoken by women, give literary form and intensely personal voice to subjective experiences of erotic love. The heroines and heroes of the epistles, scrutinizing their anguished mental states, provided the twelfth-century poets with powerful models for exploring inner consciousness from an entirely secular, individual point of view. Because most of the Ovidian letter-writers were connected with the events of the Trojan War or the adventures of Aeneas (as medieval commentaries on the *Heroides* generally point out), Ovid's epistles would easily have suggested themselves to the composers of both the twelfth-century *Eneas* and *Troie*. What the *Eneas*-poet and Benoît de Sainte-Maure add to their historical narratives by borrowing from Ovid is a closely analyzed, lyrical substratum of private experience. In their verse-narratives, however, the French poets steadily gloss their narrowly mimetic Ovidian analyses of the heart's motions in and through a larger historical and moral context.

Pagan lovers in the *Roman d'Eneas* and the *Roman de Troie* are made to examine their feelings largely through dialectically organized monologues which are actually interior dialogues, and these inner debates occur not in the *parleor* but in the privacy of the *chambre*.¹³ The *Eneas*-poet was the first to introduce serious moral *quaestiones* about love within the form of the lyric Ovidian monologue. Though he patterned his characters' interior questioning on Ovid's love letters with their unanswerable rhetorical questions, he made his questions ethical to serve his own argument. Like the *Eneas*-poet, Benoît de Sainte-Maure also turned the elegiac structure of the Ovidian love letter into a tool for dialectical exploration. His young lovers, borrowing in their monologues and dialogues from the *Heroides* as well as the *Metamorphoses*, raise serious questions about their conduct for themselves as well as their audiences. Through them, as we shall see later on, we are invited to consider the moral folly of young love as well as its romantic

allure. The private debates informing Ovidian dramas of the heart complicate the ethical questions raised by the public debates or *plaits*, both in *Eneas* and in *Troie*.

In this respect, the treatment of *fine amor* in the *romans antiques* differs remarkably from treatments of love in both the poetry of the southern troubadours and the Arthurian fictions of twelfth-century northern France. In the lyrics of the troubadours, *fine amor* operates in an atemporal realm of discrete, subjective moments and little or no effort is made to reconcile it with legitimate marriage or temporal (narrative) unfolding.¹⁴ In Arthurian fictions, on the other hand, *fine amor* tends to be linked principally with individual *aventure*, magic, and the world of *faerie*. As Jean Frappier has put it: "les héroïnes des lais et des romans bretons, l'amie de Lanval, Iseut, Guenièvre, Laudine, Viviane, même si elles sont transformées en reines, dames ou demoiselles, appartiennent à la féerie, sont venues d'un 'autre monde' inaccessible aux atteintes du malheur et du temps."¹⁵ Though history and political concerns may also play an important role, twelfth-century Arthurian romance tends to emphasize the individual lover-hero's transformation, *by means of his love adventure*, in the direction of the supramundane, the spiritual, the infinite. This tendency is fully apparent, for example, in Beroul's *Tristan*, a poem of the second half of the twelfth century.¹⁶ In Beroul, the question of *fole amor* or *amor vilaine* is raised not in terms of Ovidian *fine amor* glossed by historical and moral constraint, but in relation to the almost mystical love of Tristan for his Celtic *drue*, Iseut. A mutual passion transports both lovers *above* the sometimes sordid, often questionable political and social behavior of King Mark. By contrast, in the twelfth-century *romans antiques*, *fine amor*, given a strictly Ovidian, secular, and scholastic formulation, is rigorously studied in its temporal, social, moral, and/or political consequences.

THE ROMAN D'ENEAS AND THE QUESTION OF FOLE AMOR

The *Eneas*-poet was the first medieval *romancier* to explore in a detailed way the issue of appropriate princely love and marriage through the double filter of Ovid's love poetry and the processes of ancient history. His study prepares the way for Benoît's different but complementary dramatization of similar political and moral questions. For the *Eneas*-poet, it is not only Lavine's pointed question to her mother, "Dites lo moi,/ que est amors?" (vv. 7889–90) that shapes the *Eneas*, but also the larger ethical question, "What kind of erotic love is suitable for the good king and the good queen?" Several critics have examined the treatment of love in the *Eneas*,

and particularly the poet's calculated juxtaposition of Dido and Lavine, and a few scholars in the last several years have pointed to the key role of marriage and legitimate succession in the poem.¹⁷ In an important recent monograph, Jean-Charles Huchet has argued that the *Eneas* is a poem about marriage.¹⁸ While he rightly emphasizes the medieval political ramifications of marriage and "errance" in the *Eneas*, however, it seems to me equally necessary to understand the poem's mimetic and moral poetics of love within the context of its likely academic background.

In school commentaries on Ovid's love poems – and particularly the *Heroides* – the *Eneas*-poet would have found a neatly formulated, strictly secular theory of foolish love and legitimate marriage. And it was this theory, I argue, that gave shape and *sen* not only to his poem but also, *mutatis mutandis*, to the later *romans antiques* of Boccaccio and Chaucer. Twelfth-century clerks educated in the liberal arts would have regarded Ovid as the master *par excellence* on matters of sexual love.¹⁹ But medieval commentators and writers alike regularly appropriated the classical poet's *intentio*, and therefore his *materia*, to accommodate their own attitudes towards love and marriage. Minimizing the power of the densely circumstantial, subjective renderings of passion that constitute the *Heroides*, they would regularly discount Ovid's mimetic mode in favor of explaining the epistles' ethical import. The authors of the twelfth-century *romans antiques*, by contrast, include Heroidian mimesis in their fictions. But to focus their love dramas, they also borrow key ethical ideas about *fine* and *fole amor* from their schoolteachers.

As I shall demonstrate in detail later on, one of the newly enamored Lavine's most original and imaginative actions in the last third of the *Eneas* calls our attention in an intriguing way to Ovid's *Heroides*. After she has fallen in love with Eneas, in order to discover whether her love is mutual, Lavine decides to write him a letter (8767–73). The poet swiftly summarizes the content of the formal letter, written, we are told, in Latin, on a single leaf of parchment. Lavine appears to be trained in the *ars dictaminis*. Moving gracefully from the greeting to the confession of love, to the petition for mercy, she pledges her love to the Trojan hero straightforwardly, without guile, without the subterfuge recommended for lovers by Ovid in his *Ars amatoria* (8775–92). She then ties her letter to an arrow and has one of her archers "deliver" it to her would-be lover by shooting it from her window to the place where he is standing (8807–38). In a poem deeply indebted to Ovid's amatory works in general, Lavine's letter calls special attention to itself because its "author," like many of the Ovidian heroines, seeks a requited love. If, in fact, Lavine's letter does

signal the poet's special interest in the *Heroides*, then we may usefully ask how else that remarkable, often underrated work, together with its twelfth-century prefaces and glosses, might enrich our understanding of the *Eneas*.²⁰ As in any study of influences, one must ask not only whether poets have used inherited materials but also how they have used them. Certain details in the *Eneas*, and particularly in those parts of the poem not strictly based on the *Aeneid*, suggest that the *Heroides*, and specifically the letters of Dido to Aeneas and Paris to Helen, did influence the poet's design of individual episodes as well as larger narrative units. Moreover, the argument of the whole poem indicates that the French poet probably drew his finely crafted moral poetics of secular love for the *Eneas* at least in part from twelfth-century schoolroom commentaries on the *Heroides*.

From Menelaus' Vanjance to Paris' Jugement

In her monograph on love in the *romans antiques*, R.M. Jones expresses a commonly held view that the *Roman d'Eneas* examines two love relationships, the one between Eneas and Dido, and the other, between Eneas and Lavine.²¹ The poem, however, begins with a highly concentrated focus on two *other* relationships, namely, the legitimate marriage of Menelaus and Helen and the adulterous bond between Paris and Helen. In two substantial departures from his Virgilian model within the first two hundred lines of his poem, the *Eneas*-poet takes up the problem of love and marriage in relation to the fiery destruction of Troy. Following Virgil at the beginning of the *Aeneid* (1.8-11), he raises a question of causality at the start of his poem.²² But the cause the Norman translator explores differs fundamentally from Virgil's, as does the explanation on which he bases his poetic argument. Instead of introducing his hero, Eneas, as Virgil had done, and asking why he had to suffer nearly insuperable difficulties in pursuit of his destiny, the French poet asks what caused Troy's destruction (vv. 1-24). The medieval translator's introduction has seemed to some scholars simply his pedantic effort to replace Virgil's "ordo artificialis" with an "ordo naturalis." But its purpose seems to me rather to launch the poet's argument.²³

As the *Eneas*-poet explains why Troy fell in his poem's opening lines, he initiates a richly nuanced debate about good and bad, legitimate, illicit, and foolish loves. The first noun of the prologue, "Menelaus," and the last, "moillier," outline the poet's principal interest, while the poem's opening sentence makes the single, simple reason for Troy's tragic fall explicit:

Quant Menelaus ot Troie asise,
onc n'en torna tresqu'il l'ot prise,

The poetics of *fine amor*

gasta la terre et tot lo regne
por la vanjance de sa fenne. (1-4)

(When Menelaus had laid seige to Troy he never left until he had taken it, laid waste the land and the whole kingdom in order to avenge his wife.)

At this point, the poet does not report precisely why Menelaus had to seek revenge on account of his wife. He turns rather to the consequence of a wronged husband's vengeance in Troy's devastation. Not only has the city been burned and a kingdom destroyed, but the Trojan ruler, Priam, as well as his wife and children, have been killed. All this destruction, including the destruction of a royal family, the poet concludes, Menelaus has wrought "por le tort fait de sa moillier" (for the wrong done by/concerning his wife) (24).²⁴

In a second major departure from the *Aeneid* early in his work, the poet halts his account of Eneas' departure from Troy in order to interpolate an eighty-three-line account of the fateful Judgment of Paris. Here, in fact, he is returning to the question raised in his prologue. What was the "tort" for which Menelaus had sought revenge? Amplifying a Virgilian allusion, the poet introduces the Judgment as a matter of information; but he also uses it as an exemplary story. He does not explicitly indicate the Judgment's connection either to Menelaus or to Eneas. Yet, by the way he presents Paris' Judgment, through carefully calculated choices of detail, he invites his audience to compare this story with others related to it in the poem.²⁵

Indeed, the episode of the Judgment of Paris, *as the poet tells it*, together with the consequent story of Menelaus' revenge, provides a dynamic narrative frame for the poem as a whole. If we recall Benoît de Sainte-Maure's use of outer and inner, public and private perspectives in his *Troie*, discussed in chapter 1, we recognize that the Judgment episode in the *Eneas* functions, in a parallel way, as a morally significant outer frame for the hero's long quest. Unlike Benoît's moralizing, however, this frame takes the form not of sententious commentary but of an ethical *quaestio* or *jugement* informing a well-known mythographic story. The poet clearly expected his audience to judge the complementary narrative episodes he had collated, always listening for echoes and significant parallels. As we shall see, he himself indicates the connections between one story or episode and another, not so much directly as by implication, particularly by the repetition of key words, phrases, gestures, and actions. In observing how the *Eneas*-poet uses one story to frame and raise questions about another, we observe a structural technique which was to play an important part in the subsequent history of the *roman antique*. As everyone knows, any twelfth-century student, reading or listening to classical poetry in manuscript textbooks, would have been accustomed to interpreting texts

in relation to various mythological and “historical” narratives framing them in the margins. It was part of the *Eneas*-poet’s genius to adapt this habit of reading text and glosses together to an artistic purpose. In doing so, he prepared the way for the art of framing one narrative with another in later medieval classicizing romances including Boccaccio’s *Teseida* (see ch. 5) and Chaucer’s *Troilus* (see ch. 6).

In order to understand precisely how the *Eneas*-poet shapes Paris’ Judgment to raise the key framing ethical *quaestio* for his poem, we must begin with the way in which the poet formulates his account of the Judgment. In the *Eneas*, Paris’ judgment is not, as some scholars have suggested, merely the pedantic interpolation of mythological information. Instead, it provides a moral basis for the audience’s adjudication of motives and events through the whole course of the poem.

Preferring not to follow any of the available, well-known allegorizing commentaries on the story of Paris, the poet gives a straightforward “historical” version, one which he could have found in much the same form in contemporary marginal glosses on the *Aeneid*.²⁶

In the *Eneas*-poet’s rendering, the story is as follows:

While the three goddesses, Venus, Juno, and Pallas, are together in a *parlement*, Discordia throws a golden apple into their midst on which are inscribed Greek words saying that she will make a gift of the apple to the most beautiful of the three. A great *tençon* arises among the goddesses and they go to seek Paris, who is in the woods, in order to have him judge who should win the apple. Paris cannily awaits bribes from each of them and he is not disappointed. Juno promises that she will give him more (in possessions) than his father has and will make him a “riche home” (vv. 137–44). Pallas promises him “hardemant/ et . . . pris de chevalerie” (145–53). And Venus proffers “la plus bele fame del mont” (158–61). Paris, faced with the choice of “richece,” “proëce,” and “la feme” (165–67), elects “what pleased him most” – namely the most beautiful wife/woman, whom the poet immediately identifies as Helen.

The Judgment, as the *Eneas*-poet presents it, conforms in *nearly* every respect to contemporary marginal glosses on the *Aeneid*. But it also shows small but significant differences from them.

First of all, the story in the *Eneas* differs, in the particular combination of elements presented, from every other version I have been able to discover.²⁷ Secondly, the poet’s choice of one key detail – Pallas’ bribe – suggests that he may have combined a standard gloss on the *Aeneid* – one containing the golden apple, the inscription, Paris in the woods, and the bribes of the goddesses – with an element drawn from Ovid’s *Heroides* xvi, Paris’ letter of courtship to Helen.²⁸ In most twelfth-century *Aeneid*-glosses, Pallas Athena offers Paris *scientia* or *sapientia*, whether this

knowledge is of things or of the arts.²⁹ By contrast, the *Eneas*-poet follows Ovid in making the gift of Pallas *hardemant* and *pris de chevalerie*. His *hardemant* precisely translates Ovid's *virtutem* in *Heroides* xvi.³⁰ The bribe he selects for Pallas appears to have been chosen from among several available versions of the story because it served his poem's particular argument.³¹ As at other points in the *Eneas* as a *translatio*, this choice reflects the poet's intimate knowledge of primary texts – not only the *Aeneid* but also Ovid's love poems. At the same time, it also demonstrates the Norman clerk's independence in adapting the ancient *matière* to his own moral and political *sen*.

But what ethical question does the *Eneas*-poet's Judgment of Paris raise? And how does it set a key problem for the audience as they approach the rest of the poem? The text does not spell out the poet's *sen* directly. Instead, it requires a judicious interpretation from listeners or readers, one that will not be fully complete until the poem's end. For the poet, Ovid's Epistles – and, in particular, *Heroides* xvi, and its medieval commentaries – seem to have provided an authoritative paradigm for the moral poetics he begins to unfold through Paris' Judgment. Both Ovid and his commentators stress Paris' *exclusive* choice of a beautiful wife because he has been *captus* by love. As one twelfth-century glossator puts it, “Paris itaque pulch[re] coniugis amore captus reliquarum [petitiones (?)] postposuit/ et Veneri pomum conuenire iudicauit” (And so Paris, seized by the love of a beautiful wife, set aside the requests of the others and judged that the apple was appropriate for Venus).³² It is this exclusivity – the setting aside of other important values for the sake of love – that the *Eneas*-poet will take as a central problem as he goes on to develop the poem's other love affairs. Paris prefers the pleasure of possessing a beautiful woman to the two other goods offered by the goddesses – *proëce* and *richece*. In the poet's argument, *because* the Trojan prince allows pleasure and an exclusive desire for one good over two others to rule him, he steals Helen.

Another twelfth-century glossator on *Heroides* xvi understands Ovid's intention in Paris' Heroidian letter to be the condemnation of someone who interferes with a legitimate marriage: “digna est reprehensione qu[od] <ae> legitimum [maritum] adulterauit.”³³ By the way he shapes his prologue, the *Eneas*-poet likewise emphasizes Paris' disruption of a royal marriage, an act that is both politically treacherous and illicit.³⁴ It is this concern that explains his sharp focus on Menelaus' vengeance in relation to his *moillier* in the poem's first twenty-four lines. What matters is that Paris (misusing *angin* and *savoir*) sets *richece* and *proëce* aside for the sake of illicit sexual delight, and he thereby interferes not only with a legitimate marriage but also with the perpetuation of a dynasty. The opening 182 lines of the

Eneas provide, then, an introductory *quaestio*, preparing the way for a far fuller interrogation of the same issues concerning royal *mesure* and legitimate love in the story of Dido.

Dido and the nature of fole amor

When we first encounter Dido in the *Eneas*, we learn that she is an ideal *feme* – a word used to mean both woman and wife in the poem. She is also an ideal ruler: “unc ne fu mais par une feme/ mielz maintenu enor ne regne/ . . . Sicheüs ot a non ses sire” (Never was a kingdom nor honor better maintained by a woman . . . her lord [i.e., her husband] was named Sicheus) (379–80; 383). According to the poet’s subsequent description of her (403–4), Dido had ruled Carthage precisely “par sa *richece*,/ par son angin, par sa *proëce*” (by her wealth, by her cunning, by her bravery). By these means, he says, she held the whole country and the barons in submission to her. In twelfth-century terms (and in the poem’s terms), she had attained a perfect equilibrium or *mesure* in the management of her realm. Moreover, we are immediately made aware – because of the repetition of the words *richece* and *proëce* – that this balance involves just those values represented by Juno and Pallas in Paris’ Judgment.

In addition, Dido has been a loyal, chaste wife, even in the face of her “sire” Sicheus’ death. Confiding to her sister Anna her new passion for Eneas, she gives the poem’s first full definition of good married love (1304–20). Dido’s ardent defense of loyalty to her dead husband, which follows Virgil in most of its details, serves to complete the poet’s initial portrait of the successful Carthaginian (and medieval) queen. In our first acquaintance with her, she is a perfect example of political, social, and moral *mesure*, a balance that includes chaste married love. But, suddenly, irrevocably, this initial model of political power (*proëce*), noble possessions (*richece*), and loyal married love (*amor*) in the *Eneas* fails in the face of passion. The author shows how Dido’s resolve is undone by obsessive love – which the poet identifies as “foolish.”

For the *Eneas*-poet, the word “foolish” is essential to his study of Dido, and foolishness is one of the key qualities he assigns to her love in the epitaph he writes for her tombstone. The epitaph, which the poet may well have modeled on Ovid’s *Heroides* VII (195–96), reports the fatal judgment that Dido, like Paris, has made:³⁵

la letre dit que: “Iluec gist
Dido qui por amor s’ocist;
onques ne fu meillor paiene,
s’ele n’eust amor soltaine,

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*mais ele ama trop folemant,
savoir ne li valut noiant.*" (2139–44; my emphasis)

(The inscription says "Here lies Dido who killed herself for love. There was never a greater pagan, if she had not had unrequited/exclusive love, but she loved very foolishly nor was her wisdom worth anything to her.")

As the tombstone declares for all posterity, Dido loved "trop folemant."

When we seek to understand what the words "foolish/foolishly" mean in the poet's description of Dido's love, the *Heroides* and their twelfth-century commentaries once again prove helpful.³⁶ At the same time, the *Eneas*-poet also provides his own original glossing of his classical source. In *Heroides* VII, Dido, accusing Aeneas of ingratitude and deafness to her feeling, calls herself "stulta" (VII.28). Virgil had never used the word "stultus" to describe Dido's love. Yet, it is precisely the Ovidian Dido's characterization of herself as "stulta" that seems to have led medieval commentators, generalizing from Ovid's text, to argue that Dido in *Heroides* VII exemplifies "*stultus* [foolish] *amans*." She is foolish, so one twelfth-century commentator suggests, because she fell in love with someone whose destiny it was to leave her. "Like Phyllis, [she] has placed her love in a man 'certain' to go away."³⁷ This is the emphasis Ovid had given to his Virgilian materials, and it is one that enters centrally into the commentary tradition; it also contributes to the *Eneas*-poet's depiction of Dido's love.³⁸

The *Eneas*-poet's translation of *stultus* into *fole* follows usual Late Latin and early vernacular practice. The word *fole*, from Late Latin *follicis*, meaning literally "inflated balloon," was regularly taken as a synonym for *stultus*.³⁹ When the Norman poet, like Ovid, identifies his Dido as a "foolish" lover, his definition both includes and goes beyond the classical poet's as well as the glossator's. Of the additional senses of *fole amor* he develops, one is moral, the other political. And all three meanings of "foolishness" in love participate in his poetics of good and bad, *fine* and *fole*, legitimate and illegitimate love for medieval rulers.

Let us turn first to the Norman Dido's Ovidian conception of her folly. In a long monologue of self-assessment, the bereft queen analyzes her love in terms that will stand in systematic contrast to Lavine's ideal of mutual love in the last part of the poem. She has, she says, been "fole" because her lover does not share her feelings:

molt par sui fole;
...
Nos sentons molt diversement:
ge muir d'amor, il ne s'en sent,
il est en pes, ge ai les mals;

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amors n'est pas vers moi loials,
quant ne senton comunement.
Se il sentist ce que ge sent,
qu'il amast moi si com ge lui,
ne partisson ja mes andui.

(1814; 1823–30)

(I am very foolish . . . We feel very differently: I die of love, he does not feel any of it; he is at peace, I have woes. Love is not loyal to me because we do not feel the same. If he felt what I feel, so that he loved me as I love him, we two would never part.)

In designing this important speech, the poet offers his own gloss on the Ovidian Dido's intensely personal analysis of her love in *Heroides* VII. Ovid's distraught heroine, addressing an absent Aeneas in her letter, had declared:

Ille quidem male gratus et ad mea munera surdus
et quo, *si non sim stulta*, carere velim.⁴⁰

(VII.27–28; my emphasis)

(He is ungrateful and deaf to my kindnesses, and if I were not foolish, I would want him to go.)

The Norman Dido's "molt par sui fole" seems to be a direct translation of Ovid's "*si non sim stulta*" (VII.28), though she alters Aeneas' Ovidian deafness to her, declaring instead, "ne ne torna vers moi son oil" (he did not turn his eye towards me) (1817). But her point is the same as the Ovidian Dido's. Her Eneas does not pay attention to or share her feeling.

In sum, in the Ovidian Dido's assessment of her situation, we find the Norman poet's probable inspiration for his morally central conception of his own Dido as a "foolish" lover. As her epitaph puts it, the Carthaginian queen loved "trop folemant" because she involved herself in "amor soltaine" (2142). The word *soltaine* is crucially important in the epitaph and, at least in one of its senses, it clearly describes the one-sidedness of Dido's love as Ovid had represented it in the *Heroides*.⁴¹ But *soltaine* also bears on the queen's failure as a ruler. In the *Eneas*-poet's larger political argument, Dido's love has excluded two other wordly goods appropriate for rulers – *richece* and *proëce*. The single word *soltaine* seems to cover at once the lack of mutuality in Dido's love for Eneas and the exclusivity of her love, its obliteration of her duties as queen.⁴² As Dido herself explains, looking on the bed she had shared with Eneas:

come fole l'ai tant amé
. . .
ci lais m'enor et mon barnage,
et deguerpis sanz oir Cartage,
ci perc mon nom, tote ma gloire,
. . .

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Molt fui ançois et pros et sage,
que me donast amor tel rage,
et molt fusse buone eüree,
se ne venist an ma contree
li Troïens qui m'a traïe,
par cui amor ge perc la vie.

(2047; 2051-53; 2057-62)

(As a fool I loved him so much . . . Here I set aside my honor [or *fief*] and my political power and I leave Carthage without an heir. Here I lose my name, all my glory . . . I was once both brave⁴³ and wise until love gave me such madness, and I would have been very happy if he had not come into my country, the Trojan who betrayed me, for love of whom I lose my life.)

If the Norman Dido's Ovidian assessment of her love as foolish is personal and concerns a lack of mutual feeling, it also includes the tragic recognition that she, like Paris, has set aside *proëce*, *savoir*, and *richece* for the sake of *amor*. Dido knows too that she has deprived Carthage of an heir. Her love has kept her from taking a legitimate husband and thereby perpetuating her rule through her children.

These latter political concerns the *Eneas*-poet develops in detail from two different angles, one of which is his own and the other, Virgilian. First of all, he provides a moral framework within which to judge all such loves, one that seems to owe as much to the attitudes of medieval commentators towards Ovidian passion as it does to Ovid's *Remedia amoris* and *Heroides*. His broad moral conception of Dido's love (and his implied definition of folly) is epitomized in a single line of generalizing commentary on her grief: "amors nen a sens ne mesure" (1882). Moreover, the poet directly opposes this lack of sense and measure to wisdom. As he says of Dido in the midst of her passion:

ne set qu'el dit ne qu'ele fait;
[tot pert le sens et la parole,
Amor l'a fait de sage fole.]

(1406-8)⁴⁴

(she does not know what she says or what she does; she has lost good sense and speech; love has changed her from wise to foolish.)⁴⁵

But the *Eneas*-poet does not *simply* oppose wisdom and folly in an abstract way. He studies the inner drama of foolish love in relation to political responsibility. And, in this interest, he clearly follows Virgil rather than Ovid, though his Virgil is distinctly medievalized.

According to the poem's most pressing and most fully developed argument about love, Dido is foolish not so much because Eneas loved his destiny more than he loved her but because she has failed to balance her love in relation to her other responsibilities, and specifically her *proëce* and

her *richece*.⁴⁶ In addition, in her failure, she rejects the *savoir* and *engin* which had won her the rule of Carthage in the first place.⁴⁷ Once she has succumbed to her passion, the poet hastens to outline the dire political consequences of her foolishness:

molt soloit bien terre tenir
et bien soloit guerre baillir,
or a tot mis an nonchaloir
et an obli par non savoir.
Amors li a fait oblïer
terre a tenir et a garder. (1409-14)⁴⁸

(She was accustomed to keeping her land well, and accustomed to carrying on wars well and now she has put everything [aside] in negligence and in forgetfulness by not maintaining her wise judgment [*savoir*]. Love has made her forget to keep and protect her land.)

Furthermore, Dido has become wanton, embraced *luxuria*, and given up her good name.

Through her folly too Dido's subjects have learned a medieval clerkly lesson about foolishness in women:⁴⁹

Antr'els dient, et si ont droit,
molt par est fous qui feme croit:
ne se tient prou an sa parole;
tel tient l'en sage qui est fole. (1589-92)

(Among themselves they say, and they are right, anyone who believes a woman is very foolish; she cannot remain honorable in her speech; people hold to be wise someone who is a fool.)

To summarize his medievalized Virgilian political argument about Dido's folly, the poet invites us, two thousand lines after Paris' Judgment, to ask how her choice of foolish love – her “judgment” – recapitulates Paris'.

Grant duel demoinent anviron
ses pucelles et si baron;
formant regretent sa *prœce*
et son *savoir* et sa *richece*. (2125-28; my emphasis)⁵⁰

(Her maidens and her barons mourned greatly and greatly lamented her bravery, her wisdom, and her wealth.)

After her body has been ceremonially burnt, her subjects specifically recall her *prœce*, her *savoir*, and her *richece*, all of which she, a great ruler, has given up for love.

When Dido finds herself in the underworld after her suicide, she does not dare approach Sicheus because “li avoit mentie/ la foi qu’el li avoit plevie” (she had betrayed the faith that she had pledged to him) (2657-58).

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As the *Eneas*-poet alters his Virgilian original, which had allowed Dido an other-worldly reunion with her husband, he powerfully epitomizes one of his most important arguments. Dido has earned eternal shame because, in her foolish love, she has betrayed her legitimate husband. In this regard, the Norman poet is giving his own medieval political definition of *stultus* or “foolish” love as opposed to legitimate married love. This opposition, which is systematically rather than casually developed in the poem, seems to derive neither from Virgil nor from Ovid. Instead, it coincides with medieval commentaries on Ovid’s *Heroides*; it also anticipates the *Eneas*-poet’s concluding positive study of Lavine in her good, honest love for the Trojan hero.

As one twelfth-century gloss describes Ovid’s intention in the *Heroides*:

[The poet’s] intention is to commend legitimate marriage or love, and he treats of this love in a threefold way: namely, of legitimate, of illicit, and of foolish [love] – of legitimate through Penelope; of illicit, through Canace; of foolish, through Phyllis. But these two parts, namely foolish and illicit, he includes not for their own sake but for the sake of commending the third, and thus by commending legitimate [love], he condemns foolish and illicit . . . The final cause is this, that, having seen the usefulness that proceeds from legitimate [love] and the misfortunes that are accustomed to follow from foolish and illicit [love], we may flee both of these and adhere only to chaste [love].⁵¹

Ovid might well have balked at so neat and moral a summary of his letters. Moreover, he might have been surprised to learn that the epistles could all be construed as a series of juxtaposed examples pointing finally to the same simple moral lesson. Yet medieval schoolteachers clearly taught the *Heroides* in just this way, as a collection of intentionally juxtaposed, contrastive studies dramatizing either good, legitimate love or illicit or foolish love. Through such calculated exempla, they suggest, Ovid aimed to warn his readers against destructive, illicit relationships and to celebrate faithful marriage.

In a parallel way, the *Eneas*-poet uses the stories of Paris and Dido to examine with his aristocratic public the nature as well as the unfortunate private and public consequences of illegitimate and foolish love. Then, in the last long segment of his poem, he introduces a counter-example. If Paris and Dido model illicit and *fole* love driven by exclusive, unbalanced, private desire, the *Eneas*-poet orchestrates the last movement of his poem to provide a third, corrective example in his close, celebratory study of Lavine’s courtship and marriage. Instead of preferring love alone, as Paris and Dido have done, Lavine and Eneas enter into a social, politically suitable love. They manage to balance the demands of *proëce* and *richece* with those of *amor*. Lavine accepts a love that takes its place beside her beloved’s

political responsibilities. As she says, following her imaginary trial of Eneas, her husband will rule during the day (in his public role as king) and she will rule at night (in the matter of love) (9867–68). The result of such balance or measure is a love relationship no less passionate than Paris and Helen's, as the poet insists near the poem's end. But this love will issue in a legitimate marriage in which Eneas is king, Lavine queen. Moreover, it is a love that will produce offspring and thereby ensure the political stability of the kingdom.⁵²

Lavine's transformation of Ovidian fole amor

As I have suggested up to this point, the *Eneas*-poet seems to have turned to Ovid's *Heroides* and its medieval commentaries in developing his first two, negative examples of illicit and foolish love in Paris' Judgment and Dido's one-sided passion for Eneas. We might expect, then, that he would draw in the last part of his poem on those Ovidian epistles celebrating "legitimate" love, as medieval glossators called the chaste married relationships in the *Heroides*. And, indeed, this seems to be the case, at least in a general, theoretical way. As if to improve on Ovid's effort in the *Heroides* in the last segment of the *Eneas* (almost a quarter of the work [7857–10156]), the poet devises his own definition of legitimate love, a definition which is at once Ovidian and anti-Ovidian in character. Although Ovid gives five (or possibly six) examples of married love in his collection of epistles, none offers a systematic, positive model of legitimate love for young would-be royal brides and their suitors.⁵³ In particular, none of the *Heroides* illustrates directly or simply the differences between illicit or *fole amor* and the kind of chaste but also passionate (Ovidian) love suitable for rulers, whether men or women. Yet, to provide such a model seems to have been precisely the task the *Eneas*-poet set himself in the last quarter of his poem. It is as if he were answering medieval schoolmasterly expectations for the *Heroides*, which the Ovidian letters themselves could not fully meet.

The first movement in the poet's study of legitimate love is the famous dialogue between Lavine and her mother – a dialogue which draws heavily, as Faral and others have shown, on Ovidian love theory.⁵⁴ "What," Lavine asks, "is love?" "How will I know it, if I do not hear it discussed?" "Is it an illness?" As the mother answers her daughter's questions, she neatly summarizes the syndrome of Ovidian love both physical and psychological, building the symptoms around an Ovidian image of the god of love with two darts in one hand, a box signifying his healing power in the other. From her mother's description of love's paradoxically sweet pain, Lavine

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reasonably concludes that anyone who enters into such a condition must be considered "fous" (8012).

As the poem explores Lavine's experience of love, "foolishness" once again becomes a key word. In this instance, however, the *Eneas*-poet studies the transformation of Ovidian *fole amor* into a passionate love consonant with sound political marriage. Most importantly, instead of an absolute opposition between the two kinds of love, legitimate and foolish, good and bad, he argues ingeniously for the possibility of complementarity. Even as he defines Lavine's good love by its systematic contrast to Dido's *amor soltaine*, he also allows Lavine her youthful erotic attraction to Eneas.

Once Lavine has seen Eneas from her tower window and fallen in love with him, experiencing all that her mother has described, she calls herself "fole" (8134; 8211). But, at the same time, she knows, by a wise intuition granted her by the poet, that the kind of love she feels must be *anti*-Ovidian in its commitment. The movement from Ovidian to anti-Ovidian love in the *Eneas* takes place as Lavine, in the space of fifty lines (8257-8307), considers, in a deliberative monologue, two opposed definitions of *fole amor*. In her first definition, which she quickly rejects, she calls herself *fole* (as Ovid would) because she has committed herself to one lover. If she had not fallen in love with Eneas, then it would not matter whether he or Turnus won the battle for her. If one were killed, she would simply take the other as her lover (8327-34). This pattern of thought, recognizably Ovidian, is pragmatic and cynical in its tone, duplicitous in character. It also echoes the argument made by Dido's sister, Anna, more than six thousand lines earlier as she advised Dido to give up her "foolish" love (i.e., a chaste, loyal love) for the dead Sicheus in favor of the living Eneas.

As Lavine moves from one conception of foolish *amor* to another, opposite notion, she also revises her own (and Anna's) view of folly. Calling herself *fole because* she had entertained so pragmatic a notion of love, she rejects her first, Ovidian analysis of her feeling as foolish in favor of a newly conceived definition of *wise* erotic love. She knows by intuition that her love must be single and constant, that it cannot be given to more than one man. With a passionate idealism, she amplifies precisely the notion of faithful love abandoned by Dido much earlier in the poem:

Puet l'an donc si partir amor?
Or le tiens tu por changeor!
Qui bien aime ne puet boisier;
si est leals, ne puet changier;
bone amor vait tot solement
d'un sol a autre senglement;

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des que l'an velt to tierz atraire,
puis n'i a giens amors que faire.
Qui fermement velt bien amer,
son compaignon ait et son per;
del tierz après ne sai ge mie;
puis sanble ce marcheandie.
Rire puet l'an bien a plusors,
mais ne sont pas voires amors
don l'an apaie dous ou trois;
ne tient d'amor precepz ne lois
qui plus que un an velt amer:
ne si velt pas amor dobler. (8281-98)

(Can one then so divide love? Now consider yourself a changeable one! Whoever loves well cannot be deceptive about it, but is loyal and cannot change. Good love goes exclusively from one individual to another singly. As soon as one wants to attract a third, then love has nothing to do with it. Whoever firmly wants to love well has his companion and his equal. After that, I know nothing of a third. That seems more like a business matter. One may smile upon many [lovers], but they are not true loves by which one appeases two or three. He does not keep love's precepts and laws who wishes to love more than one. Love does not wish to be double.)

Lavine's clear, simple formulation of faithful single love has no exact precedent in the *Heroides*, though Penelope, whom medieval commentators regularly take to be Ovid's example *par excellence* of legitimate love (*Heroides* 1),⁵⁵ likewise represents her love as single and constant. But Lavine's definition is designed much more directly and systematically than Penelope's letter to counterpoint the counsels to duplicity in the *Ars amatoria*. Above all, Lavine defends fidelity to a single person as a primary requirement for love.⁵⁶

Lavine and Eneas in love

Earlier in this chapter I suggested that the letter Lavine writes to Eneas after she has fallen in love (8775ff.) seems to signal the poet's interest in the *Heroides*. We must now examine that hypothesis by looking more closely at the epistle as well as its immediate narrative context. First of all, Lavine's letter, like most of the *Heroides*, is by a woman, and a woman who takes the initiative in a matter of love. In addition, its subject is an overpowering passion, which the sender wants to communicate to the recipient. Like many of Ovid's "authors" in the *Heroides*, the *Eneas*-poet's Lavine yearns for assurance from her would-be lover that he shares her feeling.

But there are important differences between Lavine's letter in the *Eneas* and Ovid's fictive epistles. No letter in the *Heroides* initiates a love that is legitimate. Many of the epistles record the grief occasioned by a separation

of lovers, whether they are married or not. And, while the exchange of letters between Paris and Helen does begin a love relationship, the relationship is an illicit one. Furthermore, in the *Eneas*-poet's argument, Lavine's letter is not a fiction but part of a history, and it has a direct effect on the course of that history.⁵⁷ Unlike most of the epistles of the *Heroides*, it is actually delivered to its intended recipient, who reads and interprets it. Having tied her letter to a literal arrow (as opposed to Cupid's metaphoric arrow), Lavine has one of her archers shoot her missive to the place where Eneas is standing.

In summarizing the content of Lavine's letter as well as the physical materials she used to compose it, the Norman poet seems to be evoking not only the *Heroides* but also Ovid's several instructions about duplicitous letter-writing in the *Ars amatoria*. In Lavine's composition he implies a set of rules for love epistles diametrically opposed to Ovid's rules in the *Ars*. As a true lover, Lavine writes a serious, unambiguous letter, one that will affect not only her own life but also the course of political history. Using parchment instead of the wax tablet Ovid recommends in the *Ars* for safety's sake (messages in wax can easily be erased), she confesses her love for Eneas. Instead of trafficking in *blanditias* as an Ovidian suppliant would, Lavine reveals to her *ami* "Tot . . . son talant" (wholly . . . her desire) (8786).⁵⁸

In the poet's argument, Eneas actually learns how to love with a true, single-minded passion only after he has read the letter attached to the arrow. (He is wounded not by Cupid's dart but by Lavine's true words of love.) As he analyzes her text, he comes to understand the letter writer's intent. But in order to do so, he, like the audience listening to the poem, must actively reject Ovidian ideas of Cupid's arrow and feminine cunning. Eneas' rejection comes by means of his interior debate. The Ovidian position of the *Ars amatoria* is richly represented in his multiple symptoms of passionate love and in his unexamined, self-aggrandizing initial interpretation of Lavine's letter-bearing arrow. "I am wounded to the death," he declares in one of his voices. But another, rational voice in his psyche, arguing the other side of the case, replies, "You lie; it fell very far from you." The second voice also reminds him reasonably enough that the letter has simply assured him of Lavine's love if he wins in battle. Again, in his first voice, he wonders, with an Ovidian cynicism, whether Lavine has offered to Turnus the same love as she has to him: "une chose nos fait antandre,/ li quels que l'aviegne au prendre,/ que ele l'ait ainçois amé" (she makes us understand the same thing; that, whichever of us may happen to take her, she loved him first) (9005-7). But in his second voice, as he reflects on the contents of the letter, Eneas counters with the recognition that

Lavine must indeed love him alone: “ne puet parler d’amor noiant/ qui ne aime et qui n’en sent” (anyone who does not love and does not feel it cannot say anything about love) (9017–18). Eneas’ questions concerning a true, honest language of love are also the poem’s; moreover, they directly challenge the kinds of rhetorical manipulation advocated for letter writing (and love) in Ovid’s *Ars amatoria*.

Finally, Eneas reiterates Lavine’s belief that true love must be mutual. Looking back on his relationship with Dido, he compares it with his new experience. Never, he says, would he have left the Carthaginian queen, *if* he had felt towards her what he now feels towards Lavine (9038–45). This comparison is vital to the poet’s vindication of Eneas as a true lover. The wise love he celebrates has a powerful irrational or suprarational, erotic component; at the same time, it also participates fully in rational considerations of social appropriateness and fidelity. In addition, the poet uses Eneas’ self-analysis to show the place of legitimate mutual love in relation to the other two aspects of the ruler’s life he has been developing – the possession of land (*richece*) and the practice of military courage (*proëce*). For Eneas, unlike Turnus, love animates his attraction for Latium and provides him with the boldness necessary to overcome his enemy (9046–72).⁵⁹

Let us turn, in conclusion, to the imaginary “trial” or *plait* to which Lavine subjects Eneas (lines 9846–10078). As we saw in chapter 2, the evolution of the judicial *plait* in new directions is a hallmark of the French *romans antiques*. In the case we are about to examine, the *Eneas*-poet makes the argument on both sides of a key moral question private. Lavine’s debate takes the form of an interior monologic deliberation as she considers the meaning of “foolishness” in relation to *amor*, *proëce*, and *richece*. Because her beloved does not come to her immediately after his battle with Turnus, she is in anguish and begins to imagine that he does not care for her. In this state, she weighs his worth and examines his love in terms which directly recall the details of Paris’ fateful Judgment. A “foolish cause [*fol plait*] I have undertaken,” she declares (9847):

or avra par unbre de moi
la terre et lo regne le roi;
se il an a tote l’enor,
molt li sera po de m’amor. (9849–52)

(Now, with me as a pretext, he will have the land and the king’s realm; if he has all the honor of it, my love will mean very little to him.)

But Lavine is wise enough to argue the other side of the case as well. If Eneas conquers the world during the day, he will conquer her at night

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(9868). Furthermore, the barons would never grant him her lands if Eneas did not want her as his wife. In effect, she acquits Eneas (as the audience also must), concluding that he will balance well the demands of *richece*, *proëce*, and *amor*.

The poem's last scene – the marriage and coronation of Eneas and Lavine – offers a final, celebratory judgment on the moral character of the good prince in love. Eneas receives Latinus' *realme*, his *enor*, and his *fille*. Musical instruments sound and all are delighted. The narrator's comment on the joyful scene returns us explicitly to Paris' Judgment and makes a telling comparison:

Unques Paris n'ot graignor joie,
quant Eloine tint dedanz Troie,
qu'Eneas ot, quant tint s'amie
en Laurente.

(10109–12)

(Paris never had greater joy when he held Helen within Troy than Eneas had when he possessed his beloved in Laurentium.)

In a swift concluding summary, the narrator assures his audience that Eneas proved to be a good king. He builds Albe, a city *riche* and *granz*. Unlike Dido, he never abandons the kingdom he has won through *proëce*. When he dies, his son, Ascanius, succeeds him. The rule then descends *d'oir an oir* until Romulus and Remus found the city of Rome.

Artistic form and moral sen in the Roman d'Eneas

Critics who have discussed the artistry of the *Eneas* have not always found reason for praise. As Charles Muscatine says of it: "Apart from being by turns heroic and erotic, the poem appears to have no theme . . . There is no relation between Eneas in love and Eneas at war. The Dido episode, which itself contains some moving poetry, does not shed its light on the rest of the poem."⁶⁰ Yet, if we examine the poet's borrowing and elaboration of Ovidian materials in his reworking of Virgil, and especially his use of the *Heroides*, we discover his neatly balanced interrogation of private and public values important to the lives of his twelfth-century aristocratic public. The architectural harmonies of the *Eneas* are to be found not in the linear narrative *per se* but rather in a skillful, almost mechanical juxtaposition of questions or *jugements* concerning the subjective experience of erotic love in relation to moral and political responsibility. The poem as a whole poses just these questions of measure and reason concerning *richece*, *proëce*, and *amor* which the poet first raises by recounting Paris' fateful, disastrous decision in the goddesses' *tençon*. Dido's choice of Ovidian "foolish" love is

juxtaposed with Paris' Judgment on one side, Lavine's on the other, to exemplify the differences between *stultus* or *illicitus* love and the kind of *castus amor* suitable for Norman royal lovers.

As far as I can determine, the *Eneas*-poet was the first writer to "enclose" both the *Aeneid* and the medievalized *Heroides* in an extended, artfully composed, vernacular narrative. But he has transformed his Ovidian and Virgilian materials for his own purposes. The result is an elegantly crafted exploration, designed for twelfth-century princes and princesses, of the nature and art of foolish *versus* legitimate love and marriage. The poet poses the *problem* of balancing erotic passion with the demands of public, political life through subjective dramas of consciousness and dialectical interrogation. By these means, he not only refines the lessons of medieval commentaries on Ovid but also renders them immediate, credible, and usable for his aristocratic audiences.

FOOLISH LOVE AND LEGITIMATE MARRIAGE IN BENOÎT DE
SAINTE-MAURE'S *ROMAN DE TROIE*

Like the *Eneas*-poet, Benoît de Sainte-Maure used his verse-narrative in part to raise moral and political questions about erotic love. In doing so, he insured that the drama of Ovidian (*fole*) *amor* would play a key role in the subsequent development of the *roman antique* as a narrative form. Benoît marshals a constellation of topoi, motifs, and techniques to isolate his four principal examples of *fine amor* from the epic mood that dominates most of his poem and to free them, though only provisionally, from his moralizing commentary. The gentle atmosphere of spring, acutely subjective, introspective monologue or dialogue, close analyses of personal feeling, especially by women, Ovidian love sickness all serve to draw the audience of *Troie* into states of consciousness and experiences of private affection alien to epic and history.

Yet if Benoît isolates his accounts of love within his epic and moral frame by shifts of tone and perspective, he also insists on an interplay between Ovidian "romance" and its political and moral consequences in the unfolding history of Troy's fall. As Robert Lumiansky has pointed out, the four love affairs dramatized in *Troie* technically speaking occupy only about 6,500 lines or one-fifth of the poem.⁶¹ What Lumiansky did not notice was that the poet also uses his affairs to organize very much larger units in his composition.⁶² Ovidian foolish as opposed to legitimate married love infiltrates the political world of the Trojans and Greeks at the highest levels, distorting public speeches, paralyzing heroes, generating treachery, ruining a kingdom.

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From the beginning of his poem, Benoît has a fully formed notion of what *fine amor* is and what effects it is likely to have, politically, psychologically, and physically, on those who experience it. By isolating his uses of the phrase *fine amor*, we can grasp the field of meaning he invariably associates with it.⁶³ The poet first mentions *fine* (i.e., perfect, true) *amor* very briefly in the summary of his poem following his prologue as he outlines Diomedes' feelings for Briseida, "l'amie Troilus." He seems to expect his audience to recognize the phrase as he promises to recount "la fine amor/ E la destrece e la dolor/ Que sofri li fiz Tydeüs/ Puis por l'amie Troilus" (the perfect love, and the profound affliction and the anguish that Tydeus' son suffered then for Troilus' lover) (393–96). In associating this particular kind of love with *destrece*, *dolor*, and suffering he anticipates his later, protracted dramatizations of each of his principal lovers in the poem – Medea, Paris, Helen, Achilles, Troilus, Briseida, and Diomedes.

Near the beginning of *Troie*, in his long account of Medea in love with Jason, we learn how *fine amor* begins as a feeling that "flames up" (*esprendre*).⁶⁴ This collocation of love and fire has very ancient roots, but it is also one Ovid had used with great regularity in both his love poems and his *Metamorphoses*. The flame of love is kindled by one lover seeing and admiring the other. In Medea's case, she first sees and studies Jason's appearance as he sits beside her father in the royal *sale*. Benoît, entering into Medea's consciousness, imagines for us her detailed survey of Jason's eyes, hair, face, mouth, chin, body, arms, and chest, as well as his manner of speaking and conducting himself.

The result of this first awakening of *fine amor* is, predictably, *grant peine* (1291). Medea cannot find either *repos* or *solaz* because she is caught in the *laz amors* (net of love) (1294–95). Benoît's paradigm for love's suffering, like that of the *Eneas*-poet, includes typical Ovidian symptoms, which he outlines at length in describing the experiences of Achilles:

S'estut dedenz mornes, pensis,
Come cil qui d'amor est espris,
Qui ne se set vis conseillier,
Qui ne puet beivre ne mangier,
Qui n'a repos de nuit ne jor.
Si le travaille fine amor
Qu'il nen a joie ne deport. (19427–33)

(He was sorrowful and pensive within himself, as someone who is enflamed with love, who does not know how to advise himself, who cannot drink or eat, who has no rest either night or day. And *fine amor* works on him so that he has neither joy nor pleasure.)

This set of reactions overcomes each of Benoît's lovers in much the same way and causes them to enter into deeply introspective analyses of their experience, which they themselves tend to describe as *fole*.⁶⁵

To some extent, Benoît's *fine amor* is autonomous, asocial, and irrepressible. It simply happens to young noblemen and high-born maidens, and those who are caught by it must respond, willy-nilly, to its demands. But the poet also contextualizes each of the love affairs, locating them within a narrative focused on political and moral issues. In all but one case, the poet treats *fine amor* in relation to legitimate (and politically appropriate) marriage. In the very first affair of the poem, after Medea has first felt love's pangs, she desires Jason *a mariage* (1290). Furthermore, Jason promises to fulfill her wish. "A femme vos esposeraï," he declares, "Sor tote rien vos amerai,/ Ma dame sereiz e m'amie,/ De mei avreiz la seignorie" (I will make you my wife. I will love you above everything. You will by my wife and my lover [*amie*]. You will have lordship over me) (1433–36). Here, we have the prospect of a marriage which may *seem* like Eneas' to Lavine. But this marriage, based as it is, in Benoît's argument, not on Lavinian but Ovidian love, is not sound and it will end in disaster.⁶⁶

In no instance save that of Troilus and Briseida does Benoît fail to link foolish *fine amor* with the question of legitimate marriage. If Medea betrays her father in failing to make a good political marriage because of love, Paris betrays *his* family's and country's best interests by stealing and "marrying" Helen. In addition, Helen betrays her royal Greek husband, thereby causing a war. Furthermore, Paris dies without an heir and, as we shall see later, Benoît emphasizes through Paris the poignant sadness of a young future king dead because of an illicit love before he can assume power. Achilles, foolishly in love with Polyxena, seeks to marry the daughter of his royal enemy and he thereby meets his death. Even when the poet does depict good marriages, based on *bone amor*, he shows how their fruitfulness can be undermined by passionate treachery. But we shall return to the generally ignored, vitally important subject of legitimate love and marriage in *Troie* at the end of this chapter.

Above all, in Benoît's argument, foolish or illicit love affairs will conclude in personal as well as political disaster. Four dramatically rendered, subjective "tragedies" of love, as medieval glossators on Ovid's *Remedia* would define the affairs, inform Troy's sad fall.⁶⁷ Both the narrator's commentary and the historical framing teach us that love unblessed by marriage brings death, that women are changeable and treacherous, that foolish Ovidian passion disrupts and even destroys political order.

But to give this simple formulation of Benoît's lessons on love in *Troie* is to overlook the powerful effect of his dramatic questioning of his subject. The poet, deploying his techniques of multiple perspective, plays the youthful naiveté of his lovers against the circumstances of political life and

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the sober rationality of academic wisdom. The lovers speak their own experience and these dramatic enactments give a concrete human complexity to the tragi-comic situations in which they find themselves. The poet's fictive imagination together with his skillful juxtapositions of perspective illuminate the poignant sadness of knowledge acquired too late, of tragedies that far exceed the expectations or deserts of their unwitting, inexperienced young perpetrators. In each of the four affairs, every detail in the drama of *fine amor* eventually assumes significance as part of Benoît's overarching moral argument concerning the folly of youthful passion as well as the devastating effects of *aventure*, Fortune, and Destiny. Yet the richness of the narrative as a whole and its openness to interpretation derive in large part from the dynamic interplay between a carefully developed poetics of private Ovidian love and the larger epico-historical narrative.

Medea and Jason

Benoît's Medea initiates the poet's incremental inquisition of the nature and dangers of *fine amor* in the *Roman de Troie*. At the same time he establishes through her his model for love's physiognomy and psychology. In Dares, the account of Jason's journey to Colchis is extremely brief and makes no mention at all of Medea: "Thus, reembarking, they [Jason and his companions] departed from Phrygia, and set out for Colchis, and stole the fleece, and returned to their homeland."⁶⁸ In grafting Medea's love story (nearly 900 lines of poetry) to this bare account, Benoît seems to have turned to the *Heroides* and the *Metamorphoses*.⁶⁹ In both *Heroides* XII and *Metamorphoses* VII. Ovid's Medea analyzes with lyric intensity the passion that overtakes her when she first sees the beautiful young Jason in her father's palace. In the *Heroides*, she recalls how she lay awake all night in her bedchamber, gripped by both her new love and her fear for Jason's safety. Benoît like Ovid uses Oëtès' palace and Medea's bedchamber as settings, though, as we saw in chapter 1, the French poet greatly enlarges and specifies their role as the framing architectural locus for love's drama.

Benoît also makes important shifts of emphasis and material additions in recounting the affair. What we must observe immediately is that the French poet gives Medea a specific political significance to which Ovid had paid only slight attention. From the start we are made aware of an interplay between Ovidian *fine amor* and the larger political issues of the *roman antique*, between passionate young love and the concerns of the body politic, concerns that include an interest in good, fruitful marriages. Before we meet her, we learn that Medea is the only child and heir of her father, King Oëtès:

Chaucer and the *roman antique*

C'est une fille qu'il aveit,
Que de mout grant beauté esteit;
Il n'aveit plus enfant ne heir.

(1213-15; my emphasis)

(There is one daughter whom he had, who had very great beauty; he had no other child or heir.)

At the very end of the episode, as the narrator summarizes the nature of her tragedy, he draws out the political consequences of her foolish love:

Grant folie fist Medea:
Trop ot le vassal aamé,
Por lui laissa son parenté,
Son pere e sa mere e sa gent. (2030-33)

(Medea performed a great folly; she loved the vassal too much; for him she left her relatives, her father and her mother and her people.)

Benoît does not dwell on the public ramifications of Medea's *folie* (she has deprived her father of a legitimate heir). But the political frame calls attention to an issue that will assume central importance in the course of the poem. Foolish love destroys families, interferes with political succession, ruins kingdoms. Interestingly enough, this frame corresponds to at least one twelfth-century commentator's summary of Ovid's intention in *Heroides* XII:

Auctor stulte amantes reprehendit per ipsam, quae per amorem extranei patrem prodidit, patriam derelinquit.

(The author condemns foolish lovers through her [i.e., Medea] who for love of a foreigner betrayed her father, left her country.)⁷⁰

This familial, political concern plays only a minor part in the *Heroides* and the *Metamorphoses*; yet Benoît seems so interested in just this question that he significantly alters Ovid's account to make Medea Oëtès' *only* child and heir.

Benoît's political and sapiential frames, however, remain in the background for most of his long narrative concerning Jason and Medea. As we saw in the first chapter, the French poet gives full play to the drama of young love by his close, voyeuristic observation of Medea's acts and art of love. Here, I want to concentrate on his depiction of the experience of love itself. Benoît's Medea is young, tender, naïve, inexperienced in matters of love, though she is also well educated in the art of speaking (1310). She is, in fact, one of those *puellae* for whom Ovid was said to have written his *Ars amatoria*. "Never," the narrator tells us, has Medea "intended or wanted to love, nor has she had an *ami*" (1283-84). When she first

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approaches Jason to speak to him, she is *vergondose* (full of a sense of shame) (1309) as she also is when he arrives in her bedroom (1590). In our first encounter with Oëtès' daughter in *Troie*, she is richly dressed. Her tunic is made of a dark blue-purple embroidered with gold. Such richness, such ornamentation – whether attached to clothing or architecture – will always coincide in Benoît with worldly foolishness, whether political or personal, and will, like erotic passion, always presage disaster. Yet, as he records the processes of Ovidian young love in this first episode of *fine amor* in his poem, Benoît tends to suspend judgment, withdrawing his academic and epic voices, deferring to the drama of the lovers' first meeting.

When Medea first sees Jason in the midst of the dining hall, she recalls the praises she has heard of him. She is struck by his beauty and gazes at him intently, taking in his whole body as well as his *bone maniere*. Immediately, suddenly, she falls in love. The result of this fall is suffering. Medea is caught in the *laz* of an all-powerful *Amors* and she cannot sleep for “les uit jorz de la semaine” (the eight days of the week) (1292). The fall leads to an intense self-analysis, in which Medea acknowledges her own folly.

The kind of interior dialogue in which Medea engages has its background in the *Metamorphoses* (VII.18–20). Benoît's Medea shows a self-awareness comparable to her Ovidian counterpart's, but she casts her questioning in slightly different terms, terms which seem to derive as much from the medieval commentary tradition and the *Eneas* as from Ovid himself:

Certes mout a en mei folor:
De quei me sui jo entremise?
Mieuz en devreie estre reprise
Que cil qui est trovez emblant.
Fol corage e mauvais semblant
Porreit l'om or trover en mei,
Que ci m'estois ne sai por quei. (1496–1502)

Certainly there is a great foolishness in me. What have I undertaken? I have deserved reproof more than he who is found stealing. One could now find in me a foolish heart and a wicked disposition for I am here and I don't know why.)

As a young lover, the French Medea, like the *Eneas*-poet's Lavine, emphasizes the folly of her behavior even as she seeks to understand it. Yet, without the aid of Ovid's *Ars amatoria*, much less his *Remedia*, she moves headlong into her tragedy.⁷¹

In his depiction of Medea, Benoît also sketches out the physiology of love, which he will develop along the same lines, but more fully, in Achilles' affair as he creates one of Medea's male counterparts. Not only can Medea not sleep; her heart palpitates; love has inflamed her (1464–65); she

changes color when she catches sight of her lover (1858); love arouses fear in her (1865). Moreover, in Benoît's account, young foolish love involves secrecy and dissimulation and it encourages perjury. In a scene to be found neither in the *Heroides* nor the *Metamorphoses*, Medea arranges for Jason to come to her bed secretly after all the other knights have gone to sleep.⁷² And, as we saw in chapter 1, when Medea asks her governess (an Ovidian go-between) to bring Jason to her bedroom, she advises Medea to get into bed *for the sake of appearances*. Furthermore, Jason, of whom Medea demands an oath of fidelity, swears on an image of Jupiter to marry, love, and cherish her. Yet, as the narrator hastens to warn us from his distanced moral perspective, "Jason . . . envers li s'en parjura;/ Covenant ne lei ne li tint" (Jason broke his word to her nor did he keep his covenant with her) (1636–37).

Achilles and Polyxena

If Benoît's first love affair in *Troie* explores a woman's feelings and desires as she enters into *fole amor*, his last analyzes a man's. In presenting the story of Achilles and Polyxena, the French poet studies the young Greek hero's anguished love for the Trojan king's daughter. As he begins to elaborate this affair from suggestions already present in Dares, Benoît's clerkly narrator provides a moralizing frame. "Pinciez sera," he warns, just after Achilles first sees Polyxena, "d'Amors e mors" (He will be seized and bitten by love) (17568). Though the narrator also points to *destinement* as a cause for Achilles' downfall, his dominant emphasis is on the destructive power of love: "Hui . . . orreiz com faitement/ Il fu destreiz por fine amor" (Today you may hear how he was in distress for the sake of *fine amor*) (17546–47).

Following Dares, Benoît makes the setting for Achilles' fall into love a tomb and the occasion, the anniversary of Hector's death. Taking up and elaborating highly charged materials – Ovidian love, the tragedy of war, the immediacy of death – he moves his audience rapidly from joy to sorrow, sorrow to joy. The day is a beautiful one, *bel e frais*; the Trojans gather for the *riche aniversaire* within the *riche sepulture*. Games have been ordered and the young "bachelors" arrive "por les dames remirer." Yet, in this atmosphere of festivity and flirtation, Hector's body remains at the scene's center, and at least some of the observers, including the ominous Helen – who is not present in Dares – mourn.⁷³

When Benoît, reverting to his inner perspective, turns from moralizing commentary to dramatic representation, we witness Achilles' first glimpse of Polyxena, as if through the young hero's eyes. Stricken with love, he wonders at, even as he speaks, his own feelings. His face changes color and

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he enters into anxious self-analysis. We hear him repeating lessons already learned by Medea:

Trop m'a trové hui Amors prest;
Trop m'esteie en sa veie mis:
Por ço m'a si lacié e pris
Que jo ne li puis eschaper. (17648-51)

(Today love has found me too available. I was put too much in his way. Therefore he has trapped and taken me, so that I cannot escape from him.)

Later in his lamentation, he identifies his feelings of *fine amor* with foolish entrapment, linking himself to the Ovidian Narcissus, whose lyric laments in the *Metamorphoses* may have provided one model for Benoît:

jo sui desvez
E de mon sen si forsenez
Que jo ne sai que jo me faz.
S'auques estreint Amors ses laz,
Bien sai de veir que jo sui mort:
De nule part nen ai confort.
Narcisus sui, ço sai e vei,
Qui tant ama l'ombre de sei
Qu'il en morut sor la fontaine. (17685-93)

I have become mad and deprived of my sense, so that I do not know what I am doing. If love tightens his net a little, well do I know, truly, that I am dead. I have comfort from no quarter. I am Narcissus, this I know and see, who loved the reflection of himself so much that he died at the fountain.)

Yet, like Medea (and Narcissus), Achilles must love.

Like Medea too Achilles is aided by an Ovidian go-between. Medea's messenger, it will be remembered, is her *maistre* to whom she tells "tot son conseil" because "el se fiot mout en li" (1536-38). In a parallel way, Achilles summons "un suen ami, un suen feeil,/ Qui mout esteit de son conseil" (one of his friends, one of his vassals, who was very much in his confidence) (17747-48). Though the messenger's task is drawn from Dares, his character as a "friend" may owe something to an Ovidian suggestion in the *Ars amatoria*.⁷⁴

Like Medea's, Achilles' love is ultimately tragic. At last, Achilles himself repeats the narrator's moral as a lesson he has lived:

Tant m'a Amors pincie e mors,
S'ensi me tient, s'ensi m'aspreie,
Ja guaires longes ne vivreie. (18086-88)

(Love has seized me so much, and bitten me, that if it thus holds me and thus harasses me I will not live at all long.)

As love comes together with death, Achilles is finally slain by means of a trick. Hecuba, taking advantage of his foolish love, lures him to the temple of Apollo on the pretext of offering him Polyxena in marriage. There, she has him slaughtered in revenge for his killing of her son, Hector.

Paris and Helen

Benoît's second study of *fine amor* and its dire consequences in *Troie* is certainly the most important in the poem. Through their passionate love and "marriage," Paris and Helen bring Troy down. No twelfth-century student of the liberal arts would have quarreled with Benoît's large argument. Schoolmasters as well as poets regularly located blame for the Trojan War in Paris and Helen's mutual destruction of a royal marriage for the sake of their adulterous relationship. What must interest us, then, is not the argument itself, but Benoît's intricate development of the affair as it interacts with its political context.

In the last chapter, we saw how Benoît's Paris manipulates a public parliament in order to persuade the Trojans that they must steal Helen. Duplicity in language and treacherous intent, inspired by secret love or desire, continue to occupy the poet's imagination as he develops Paris' courtship of Helen and her responses. Dares had provided Benoît with the outline for the affair. When the French poet takes up Dares' scene, he greatly embellishes it, using his own architectonic and dramatic imagination as well as classical materials drawn especially from Virgil and Ovid.

At the start, Benoît establishes a setting for the love affair, a setting whose significance spans almost 20,000 lines of the *Roman de Troie*. Paris and Helen, according to Benoît's account, first see each other and fall in love in or near "un riche temple merveillos,/ Mout ancien e precios,/ . . . en l'onor Venus la deesse d'amor" (a wonderful, costly temple, very old and precious . . . in honor of Venus, the goddess of love) (4261-64). Dares, it is true, had provided the merest hint for this setting by locating a temple of Venus on the island of Cythera, where his Paris and Helen meet. But he nowhere specifies exactly where the two lovers see each other first. By contrast, Benoît uses the temple of Venus as his principal stage setting. His Helen, hearing that Paris has arrived on Cythera, hastens to place a gift on Venus' altar. When Paris learns that she has come, he greatly desires to see her. The two meet, and, looking at each other, they are both struck by love. Benoît's act of "translation" in this case may at first appear scarcely worthy of comment. We might simply conclude that the French poet moved his lovers into the environment of Venus' temple for their first encounter in order to recall a lesson of Ovid's *Ars amatoria*.⁷⁵ But for Benoît the temple

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also assumes a rich, long-lived architectonic significance in his narrative, one which, as far as I know, has never been noticed.

First, and most obviously, the Trojans return to the same temple of Venus to steal Helen little more than 150 lines after the lovers' initial meeting. In the process, they also ransack the richly decorated ancient shrine:

Mout fu li temples tost robez:
N'i laissierent or ne argent,
Drap de sieie ne guarnement. (4514–16)

(The temple was very quickly robbed; they left neither gold nor silver, cloth of silk nor trapping.)

The *richece* of the temple disappears with the unlawful departure of Helen. The Trojans' desecration is only one of Benoît's many examples of worldly pagan *richece* undone by violent acts of war. But in this case, the destruction of a sacred place dedicated to Venus directly coincides with a fateful act of foolish love.

Benoît, however, has yet another architectonic purpose in using Venus' temple as the locus for love and sacrilegious violation. Almost 20,000 lines later, at the time of Paris' death, the poet complements his temple of Venus with two other temples – those of Juno and Minerva. Before considering Benoît's interweaving of political and personal interests as he studies Paris and Helen's elegantly Ovidian courtship and their wedding, we must turn to the end of the affair in Paris' funeral.

After Paris has been killed in battle by Ajax, his body is first placed in a sepulchre within "le temple Junonis" (22895).⁷⁶ The corpse is so magnificently arranged that, as the narrator puts it, no son of a king was ever so richly placed.

Seveliz fu li cors Paris
Dedenz le temple Junonis
Si faitement qu'onc fiz de rei
Ne fu si richement, ço crei,
Ne n'iert ja mais jusqu'a la fin. (22893–97)

(Paris' body was laid out in state within Juno's temple in such a way that never was the son of a king so richly [displayed], this I believe, nor will ever be until the end [of the world].)

Of course, Paris *is* the second son of King Priam, and his rightful heir since Hector, the eldest son, is already dead. The macabre irony of Benoît's comment – made in the presence of Paris' dead body – is heightened as the young warrior's corpse is removed to a second significant temple for the funeral service. From Juno's temple, Priam has his son's body transported

"dedenz un temple riche e chier/ Fondé en l'onor de Minerve" (within a temple rich and costly, established in honor of Minerva) (23032-33). Here, in Minerva's temple, the corpse is placed in a richly ornamented sarcophagus, and, in an astonishing gesture, Priam places his ring on Paris' right finger, his sceptre in his left hand, and his crown on his dead son's head.⁷⁷ This bizarre "coronation" scene in Minerva's temple as well as the funeral vigil in Juno's temple now stand against Paris' first meeting with Helen at Venus' temple. The three temples and the dramatic actions attached to them are heavy with meaning if we recall Paris' fateful Judgment reported near the poem's beginning (3845ff.). If Venus' temple had been the locus for love's triumph, the temples of Juno and Minerva bear witness to its destructive power. We recognize the tragic consequences of the lovers' illicit "marriage" (and the revenge of the rejected goddesses in Paris' Judgment) as we observe the dead, childless heir to Troy's magnificence lying crowned in state at his funeral.

I have concentrated on Benoît's architectural framing of Paris' love affair before considering his treatment of the love itself because the frame draws us to the very heart of the poet's imaginative and moral interests as he portrays Ovidian *fine amor*. For the first time in medieval narrative poetry, Benoît uses literal settings as symbolic "places" to fix in his audience's memory both the art and the political consequences of Ovidian love. The settings he chooses help to link such ("foolish") love, implicitly and ironically, to the social and political world of public action.

But now we must return to the love affair itself as Benoît develops it from the moment Paris leaves Troy until he returns and "marries" Helen with King Priam's blessing. The poet's presentation of the affair involves a skillful, systematic questioning of public and private concerns in which two value-systems and two kinds of narrative collide, often without authorial commentary. Even as he describes Paris' adventurous journey to Greece, inspired by a private desire for the beautiful woman promised by Venus, Benoît begins his political argument indirectly by inserting a portrait of Menelaus and his family. Menelaus, we learn,

fu mout riches reis,
Mout proz, mout sages, mout corteis.
Mout ot femme de grant beauté
...
Heleine une fille en aveit,
... Hermiona ert apelee. (4227-29; 4247-49)

(was a very rich king, very courageous, very wise, very courteous. He had a wife of very great beauty . . . Helen had a daughter by him called Hermiona.)

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The family portrait of husband, wife, and legitimate heir epitomizes the proper order of society and it is tellingly juxtaposed with the intensely focused account of Paris' illicit love and Helen's defection.

When Paris arrives at the island of Cythera, where he will meet his future lover, Benoît shifts provisionally from his historical to his dramatic perspective, and so the tone and atmosphere of the narrative shift. Spring is in the air; festivities are under way at Venus' temple. Paris, "mout . . . de grant beauté . . . de cors, de façon e de vis" (of very great beauty of body, form, and face) (4286) is richly dressed. He makes his sacrifice at the temple and explains his mission to those who ask. *Renomee* – Virgil's *Fama* translated into "rumor" – acting as a go-between, brings Helen, "bele/ E riche e sage e avenant" (beautiful and wealthy, wise and charming) (4320–21) towards the temple to see the visitor. The two would-be lovers, drawn together by desire, gaze on each other, and are "wounded" by *Amor*. Benoît emphasizes their youth ("en lor aë, en lor enfance") as he describes their physiological response: "Sovent [Amors] lor fait muër colors" (Often love makes them change color) (4362). Once more, as with Medea, we witness the typical drama of young love. But in this case, the political consequences are spelled out much more fully than they had been in Medea's affair. In addition, in this case, rhetorical dissimulation – in Helen as well as Paris – complicates our response to the lovers.⁷⁸

Because he is struck by love, Paris persuades his companions to take Helen, who is "dame de tot cest regne,/ La plus preissee senz sorpeis/ Que seit el regne des Grezeis:/ Reïne est, femme Menelaus" (lady of this whole kingdom. She is, without exaggeration, the most valued there is in the kingdom of the Greeks. She is the queen, Menelaus' wife) (4420–23). The audience confronts a double intention; Paris' men, on the other hand, perceive only a political motivation in the *parlement*. Though they respond *diversement*, in the end all agree to invade the temple.

The reader's or listener's uneasiness in the face of multiple intention compounds as Benoît dramatizes Helen's response to her kidnapping: "Dame Heleine *faiseit semblant*/ Qu'ele eüst duel e ire grant" (Dame Helen pretended that she had sorrow and great anger) (4639–40; my emphasis). The verb of seeming undoes the queen's gesture of mourning, implying a doubleness which will be confirmed by her subsequent action. In fact, Helen lives up to the reputation she had earned among medieval commentators of Ovid's *Heroides*. She is one of those changeable, foolish women who seem to protest even as they easily succumb to love's promptings.

Paris likewise lives out his role as one of those who are to be condemned for treason and illicit love.⁷⁹ Benoît dramatizes the Trojan prince's art of

persuasion as he comforts his prey. Once Paris has safely secured Helen in Tenedon, he visits her and pursues his suit. After much talk, he takes her by the hand and leads her to “un feutre de porpre bise” (a carpet of dark crimson) (4734) where he clinches the argument. Repeating an argument Jason had made to Medea, he promises to be “Leiaus amis, leiaus espos . . . tote ma vie” (Loyal friend, spouse . . . all my life) (4744–45). *Under the circumstances*, in a comfortable, richly appointed domestic environment, Paris’ argument is irresistible, at least in Helen’s view. In his portrayal of Helen’s surrender, Benoît gives a first glimpse into the image of the changeable, unfaithful woman he will develop more fully in the character of Briseida. Helen, as she says, has had enough “e duel e ire” (both sorrow and anger) (4756). As if she had no choice (“Por ça sai bien qu’il m’estovra,/ Vueille o ne vueille a consentir/ Vostre buen e vostre plaisir” (Therefore I well know that I will have to accept your good will and your pleasure whether I want to or not) (4760–62) she accepts Paris’ suit. The uncertainty of agency through the whole of this episode – circumstances determine Helen’s choices, but she colludes with the circumstances – prepares the way for Chaucer’s philosophically deeper but parallel study of Criseyde falling into love in his *Troilus*.

What follows Paris’ successful courtship in *Troie* is another scene of Ovidian “romance.” In a beautiful season, “like Easter,” as Benoît puts it, the Trojan prince, leading the reins of Helen’s horse, goes to meet Priam. The king comforts his son’s hostage, promises that she will be “dame del païs,” and leads her into Troy. “A grant joie e a grant leece,” we learn in brief compass, “A Paris Heleine esposee” (With great joy and great delight Helen is wed to Paris) (4864–65). Though Benoît himself offers no comment on this fateful bigamy of Helen’s, the joyful moment of the wedding does not go unchallenged within the world of Troy. The poet, following Dares’ lead but choosing a powerful dramatic mode, raises Cassandre’s voice as a dire, prophetic warning. Two sentences in Dares become a fifty-five-line commentary on the marriage. “Mout maudiseit sovent Heleine,” we are told of Cassandre’s threnody, “Mout maudiseit le mariage” (She often greatly cursed Helen, greatly cursed the marriage) (4892–93). The prophetess predicts the downfall of Troy – “cez beles tors,/ Cist riche mur” (these beautiful fortifications, these expensive walls) (4898–99) – because of the disastrous wedding. But Priam, to silence the prophetic voice, shuts Cassandre in a room far from the festivities, where she remains *assez longement*.

Now, suddenly, the poet shifts the scene, changes his tone, and directs our attention to the public realm. We turn to the Greeks, to Agamemnon and Menelaus contemplating the theft of Helen. No gentle spring setting

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introduces the sequence. Instead, a stern, abrupt epic voice intervenes to foreground the political dilemma: “Es vos Agamemnon venu,/ Cui Menelaus ot attendu” (Behold Agamemnon whom Menelaus has awaited) (4939–40). Menelaus faces public concerns, the “hontage de sa femme,” and “le damage de son regne” (the shame of his wife and the evil to his kingdom) (4943–44). In this context, Agamemnon, considering his brother’s shame, gives one of his most powerful speeches on honor and the need for revenge. The entire episode of Helen’s theft ends, finally, with Castor and Pollux’s disappearance, which the poet attributes directly to Helen – the first gift of her defection from her husband.

When we look for the moral as opposed to the imaginative center in Benoît’s construction of this narrative sequence, a single, harsh description of the Trojan theft stands out: “Dès ore engroisse la folie” (From this moment, the folly swells/ grows pregnant) (4602). The line, in its context, concludes the Trojans’ ransacking of Venus’ temple. But it also describes with a mordant irony the way in which, from the moment of Paris’ Judgment, which we examined in chapter 2, private foolish love has begun to inform and distort the shape of the body politic. The political world of Greece and Troy (and the epic idiom) have been impregnated with the seed of Ovidian *folie*. As a direct result of sexual desire, enacted as *fine amor*, theft and deception reshape the contours of political discourse. *Folie* rather than legitimate heirs must be the logical issue of Paris and Helen’s union.

Troilus, Briseida, and Diomedes

Of the four love affairs in Benoît’s *Troie*, that of Troilus and Briseida is the only one without any precedent in Dares.⁸⁰ As far as we know, the French poet invented the story which was to inspire a number of later authors, including Boccaccio and Chaucer. Benoît’s methods of invention are characteristic of the French *romans antiques* and their progeny. He pillages the canonical texts of the arts curriculum and their commentaries for his matter as well as his moral arguments. Like the stonemasons to whom he compares himself in his prologue, he carefully arranges materials gleaned from various sources, reshaping them to suit his own composition. In the case of Troilus and Briseida’s love affair, we can follow, at least in some part, the processes of his invention.

For Benoît, Briseida’s betrayal of her *ami*, Troilus, in favor of the Greek Diomedes provides the opportunity to compose a dramatized *remedium amoris* of a kind that would have delighted medieval schoolmasters. While Ovid’s *Remedia* had warned rejected lovers against women for practical

reasons, the French poet's lessons are philosophical as well as practical. Attachment to Briseida, as to most women, is like attachment to Lady Fortune. By nature, women are unreliable and prone to betrayal because they seek comfort and flee distress. In orchestrating Briseida's affairs, Benoît establishes a chiasmic relationship between her betrayal and the fatal affair of Paris and Helen. The Greek, Helen, leaving her *patria*, betrays her royal husband by taking a Trojan lover. By contrast, the Trojan Briseida leaves Troy for the Greek camp. There, betraying her Trojan friend, Troilus, she takes a Greek lover, Diomedes, who is, as we learn much later in the poem, already married.⁸¹

In his initial portrait of Briseida, Benoît outlines her essential features, features which will be delicately but systematically dramatized in the record of her affairs. She is, we are told, a "mout . . . bele parliere/ . . . Mais sis corages li chanjot" (a very fine speaker . . . but her heart was subject to change) (5282; 5286). She is also, like Medea, *vergondose* (full of a sense of shame) (5287), a characteristic which will be richly developed in her pervasive concern for reputation. As we listen to Briseida's carefully modulated responses to Diomedes, who begins his courtship on the day she leaves Troilus, we hear an Ovidian doubleness of intention. In particular, Briseida's concern for her good name and her fear of deception precisely parallel those of Helen in her Heroidian letter to Paris.⁸²

When Ovid's Helen responds to Paris in the *Heroides*, she writes: "credulitas damno solet esse puellis/ Verbaque dicuntur veſtra carere fide" (easy belief is wont to cause harm to girls, and your words are said to lack faith) (xvii.39-40). In a similar vein, Benoît's Briseida declares to Diomedes:

Mais ne vos ai joi coneü
A doner vos si tost m'amor.
Mout s'en desveient li plusor.
Mainte pucele est escharnie
Par ceus ou est la tricherie
E qui sont mençongier e faus:
Cil deceivent les cuers leiaus. (13626-32)

(But I have not known you enough to give you my love so quickly. Many go astray [in this way]. Many a maiden is tricked by those in whom there is treachery, who are liars and false. These deceive loyal hearts.]

Again, as Briseida worries over her reputation she echoes the Ovidian Helen. Helen places the matter of her honor near the beginning of her letter: "Fama tamen clara est, et adhuc sine crimine vixi,/ Et laudem de me nullus adulter habet" (Nevertheless my reputation is bright, and until now I have lived without reproach, and no false lover wins praise concerning

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me) (xvii.17–18). Briseida, temporarily and disingenuously deflecting Diomedes' suit, depicts herself in a similar light: "Ne voudreie pas chose faire/ Que l'om poüst en mal retraire" (I would not want to do anything that one could construe as dishonorable) (13661–62). Like Helen too, of course, Briseida allows *fine amor* to overcome her fear, engender infidelity, and destroy her reputation.

What gives Benoît's incremental portrait of Briseida its special power, however, is not so much the conventional academic themes of feminine changeability and treachery he attaches to her as his subtle drama of her moods, her rhetorical strategies, her deceptions, and her self-deceptions. Partly by means of his skill in multiple perspective, the poet requires us to read her character closely from several different points of view and in several different situations. All of her behavior finally supports the poet's moral condemnation of treacherous women and foolish love. Yet when we first meet Briseida, before she parts from Troilus, the narrator gives us reason to sympathize with her as a true lover:

Le pechié deit espeneïr
Qui dous amanz fait departir,
Ensi come li Grezeis firent,
Qui puis griefment l'espeneïrent. (13313–16)

(He who causes two lovers to be separated ought to pay for his sin, as the Greeks have done, who then grievously expiated [their sin].)

In this passage Benoît solemnly condemns the Greeks for separating the two lovers, as if to support both Troilus and Briseida for their fidelity to each other.

If the French poet drew ideas for the character of Briseida from Ovid – and particularly the *Heroides* – he also turned to the classical *praeceptor amoris* in depicting her painful separation from Troilus and Diomedes' sudden love for her.⁸³ He uses his invented triangle to depict the *process* of change – the way in which the woman quickly forgets her faithful lover and succumbs to a new suitor's courtship. As he portrays the end and the beginning of *fine amor*, Benoît focuses on Briseida's fickleness as well as the Ovidian rhetoric of love that encourages her instability.

Diomedes, who is depicted as a typical young lover in *Troie* (he claims never to have had an *amie*), begins his courtship as soon as he and Briseida set out for the Greek camp. Like Paris in his Heroidian letter to Helen, he offers his love ardently and straightforwardly, promising Briseida his service and *amor veraie* without reserve (13685–90). On her side, Briseida responds to Diomedes' suit as the Ovidian Helen answers Paris, with a complex intention, masked by charming subterfuge. Her speech begins

with a temporizing phrase, which proves to be of a piece with her changeability: "*a ceste feiz*" (at this time), she says, "it is neither good nor reasonable nor just to give you words of love" (13619-21; my emphasis). Briseida does not mention her relationship with Troilus; instead, she worries aloud about how her actions will be construed. If she succumbs quickly to Diomedes' suit, she will be thought *trop legiere* and *trop fole*. She may be tricked as so many young women are by lying and false men. A woman of her worth ought not to become involved in foolish love. She would not do anything that might be considered *mal* by others. As we have already seen, Briseida's delicate calculations in this speech indicate her thorough grounding in Ovidian lore. She has no high idealism concerning fidelity to one love, but she is deeply committed to reputation and caution.⁸⁴

At the same time, and in the same speech, Benoît shows us Briseida the flirt and opportunist, flattering Diomedes even as she refuses his love "at this time." He is, she says, "*bien afaitié e bien apris*" (well educated and well taught) (13666). No woman, offered the opportunity of his love, "no matter how wealthy or beautiful," ought to refuse it (13664-72).⁸⁵ But Benoît also teaches his readers how to interpret Briseida's indirect, double response, as his Diomedes "reads" her speech and understands her unexpected intention, partly, we must assume, by her tone. Diomedes, he writes, "*fu sage e proz: / Bien entendi as premiers moz / Qu'el n'esteit mie trop sauvage*" (was wise and brave; he understood well at the first words that she was not a bit unsociable) (13681-83). Ironically, the very gentility Diomedes perceives in Briseida implies her worldly vanity and the practices of artful mendacity which contain the seeds of destruction. This initial scene of flirtation concludes with a sign. Diomedes secretly steals one of Briseida's gloves and he observes with pleasure that his lady is not disturbed by the theft.

When Benoît later introduces Briseida's capitulation to Diomedes, he skillfully juxtaposes three scenes and three different perspectives. Each one provides an implied commentary on the others in a way that is formally significant for the tradition of the *roman antique* as a questioning, dialogically constructed narrative form. First, using the tone and imagery appropriate to a love story, the poet gives a lyrical description of Paris' hunting and Helen's feasting during a period of truce. The respite from war is, for the two adulterous lovers, a time of pleasant (Ovidian) idleness. Then the poem shifts abruptly to an epic mood. The Greeks are, in the narrator's report, weighed down by an awareness of the burden and cost of the war. Within these two framing vantage points, with their very different atmospheres and characteristic topoi, Benoît locates Diomedes' love plight

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and his continuing suit of Briseida. Diomedes suffers the usual symptoms. He cannot sleep; he sighs; his mood shifts from joy to sorrow to anger; his color changes. “Tel sont,” the academic narrator declares, “li trait d’Amors sovent” (such are often the characteristics of Love) (15014).

With the same academically based, generalizing wisdom, the poet as moral philosopher reports Briseida’s behavior in response to Diomedes. When she observes her suitor’s conduct, we are told, she is three times harder on him than she had been. Here Benoît assumes the Ovidian voice of the *Remedia amoris*, warning men of women’s wiles and arrogance:

Toz jors a femme tel nature:
S’ele aparceit que vos l’ameiz
E que por li seiez destreiz,
Sempres vos fera ses orguieuz (15038–41)

(Woman always has such a nature: if she sees that you love her and are distressed on her account, she will always behave proudly towards you.)

It is, he warns, repeating Ovid, “une chose mout contraire” to love a woman when one is not loved in return. Diomedes’ *martire* (15076), however, comes to an end. Briseida, fully aware that she has caught him in her *lax* (15175), gives him her right sleeve.

One of Benoît’s most delicate strokes in depicting Briseida’s infidelity, once she has succumbed to Diomedes, is his dramatization of her own self-condemnation as she faces her betrayal of Troilus. Here Benoît gives us a richly textured inner view of his heroine. Briseida, even in her clearest moment, can observe only part of the reason for her betrayal. She realizes that “mauvais sen . . . e fol” (wicked and foolish understanding) (20242) has caused her to “betray” her friend. She becomes, in effect, a sign of bad judgment of the kind that had caused the Trojan War in the first place. She blames her falseness, lightness, and foolishness in part on the *parole* of Diomedes:

. . . Fause fui e legiere e fole
La ou j’en entendi parole:
Qui leiaument se vует garder
N’en deit ja parole escouter;
Par parole sont engeignié
Li sage e li plus vezié. (20249–54)

(I was false and light and foolish when I paid attention to his words. Whoever wants to keep herself faithfully ought never to listen to words; the wise and the most prudent are tricked by words.)

Briseida is right to blame words for her fall. But she has fully participated in the play of words, not merely listening, but using language for the sake of

manipulation. What the Ovidian Helen says of her affair in her Heroidian letter is equally true of Briseida as she flirts by speech and gesture with Diomedes: "et iam sermone coimus" (already we copulate by means of speech) (xvii, 181).

Briseida's self-analysis, partial and flawed, invites comparison with the philosophical narrator's commentary and also with the several episodes detailing the processes of duplicitous courtship. But the reader's response is not likely to be a simple one. Briseida's very limitations and blindness to herself arouse a certain sympathy for her weakness. The inner, dramatic perspectives here, and at many points in the poem, do not coincide neatly with those of the philosophical and political frames. Benoît's art of questioning moral values, which often takes the form of private, ethically oriented Ovidian monologues concerning the matter of *fine amor*, draws his public into intimate participation with his characters' lives. It is the *problematic* nature of their contingent histories, rather than the finality of Troy's fall, that occupies his creative imagination *in medias res* as he invites his audience to judge the (situational) right in the unfolding narrative.

Ulysses, Penelope, and a paradigm of bone amor in the Roman de Troie

I want to turn, finally, to an example Benoît offers of *bone amor* or married love in the *Roman de Troie*. Near the end of his poem, following Dictys, he takes up the subject of Penelope's love for Ulysses – a love also celebrated in the first of Ovid's *Heroides* and regarded by medieval commentators as the preeminent example of "legitimus" or "castus" *amor*. The French poet records Penelope's *dreit fei* to her *chere seignor* in terms that recall Lavine's love for her future husband in the *Eneas*. Ulysses, having heard about his wife's suitors, hastens home "ses torz vengier/ Que l'om li fait de sa moillier" (to avenge the wrong that had been done to him concerning his wife) (28987–88).⁸⁶

Describing Ulysses' return to his kingdom, the poet paints a picture of joyful harmony between lord and subjects, husband and wife:

Quant par la cité fu seu
Que lor sire esteit avenu,
E par tot le regne environ,
O joie e o devocion
E o grant esleecement
L'ont receü comunaument.
Onc hom ne fu mais si joïz
Ne a tel honor recoilliz,
Ne onques mais a home né

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Ne furent tel don presenté
Ne tant bon precios avoir

...
De fin cuer e do bone amor
Ama toz jorz puis son seignor.

(29017-38)

(When it was known throughout the city and by the whole kingdom that their lord had come, everyone received him with joy and devotion and great delight. Never was anyone so joyful, nor received with such joy, nor were such gifts ever presented to anyone, nor such good, valuable possessions . . . With a perfect heart and good love she [Penelope] always loved her lord.)

This portrait of perfect social happiness and order is capped by the marriage Ulysses arranges for his son, Telemachus, with Nausica, who is the daughter of his friend, King Alcenon. When Nausica subsequently gives birth to a son and heir, Poliporbus, the paradigm of legitimate, politically sound love and marriage is completed.

Benoît, however, unlike the *Eneas*-poet, does not simply celebrate his example of good married love. Dark shadows hover over Ulysses and his legitimate joy – shadows that have as much to do with Ulysses' secret participation in destructive *fole amor* as with the relentless turning of Fortune's wheel. Just after the poet has described the *riche* marriage of Telemachus and Nausica, he portrays Ulysses' joy and prosperity as a fragile state soon to be lost under the aegis of *Fortuna*:

Dès or li est prospre Fortune,
Dès or li est joiose e liee,
Mais mout riert tost vers lui irree:
A ço ne puet avoir faillance
Ne lonc terme ne demorance.

(29050-54)

(Right now Fortune is favorable to him, right now she is joyous and pleasing to him, but very quickly she will turn her anger towards him. That cannot fail to happen, nor will it be a long time or a delay [before it happens].)

In this case, Fortune gains power over Ulysses and his joy not simply because she habitually steals happiness but also because Ulysses has participated in the destructive force of illicit sexual love. To develop this argument, Benoît embellishes his source, Dictys, in significant ways. We observe his moral imagination at play as he allows an illicit affair to hover over and ominously threaten the stability of the political order for hundreds of lines in his poem. A thousand lines before Ulysses returns to his kingdom, Benoît describes his relationship with Circe, who, together with Calypso, enchants kings, princes, and lords. Their noble victims, we are told, “sempres erent si sorpris/ E si de lor amor espris/ Qu'en eus n'aveit reison ne sen” (were always so entrapped and seized by their love

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that there was neither reason nor good sense in them) (28723-25). About Circe and Calypso's relationship with their lovers the poet is very precise:

O eles cochoënt plusor,
Mais n'i esteit pas fine amor,
Que traïson e decevance. (28743-45)

(Many slept with them, but it was not *fine amor*, but treachery and deception.)

This fine distinction between "perfect love" and treason does not save Ulysses from the consequences of his passionate capitulation to Circe. When he goes to bed with her, he begets a child and, as the narrator says, "Cist fu en fiere hore engendrez/ E en plus fiere refu nez" (This [child] was begotten in a fearsome hour and born [in an hour] more fearsome) (28767-68). Yet, as a device for inviting suspense and maintaining audience interest in a matter of situational ethics, Benoît does not immediately specify the results of Ulysses' fateful night of love. "Bien dirons al definement," he promises, "En quel sen ne com faitement/ Mais ici vos dirons après" (We will certainly say at the end in what sense and how exactly, but this we will tell you later) (28768-69).

In fact, Benoît does save the dire consequence of Circe's treacherous love for the poem's *definement*. It occupies the very last dramatized episode in *Troie*. Telegonus, the illegitimate son of Ulysses and Circe, unknowingly kills his father even as he seeks to meet and know him. "Ne poëit estre autrement," the poet declares, "Itel esteit la destinee" (It could not be otherwise, such was destiny) (30228-29). Ulysses' final *aventure*, as Benoît calls his death (30154), participates at once in the unrelenting processes of destiny and in the folly of socially unsanctioned erotic love. What gives this and the other episodes of *Troie* studied in this chapter their poignant, even tragic depth is Benoît's systematic linking of unexpected *aventure*, often associated with death, with the matter of asocial, illicit *fine amor*. From one point of view, Ulysses dies at his son's hand because it is his destiny to do so; but from another, he dies because he has illegitimately begotten a child under the treacherous force of foolish *amor*.

Significantly enough, Benoît departs from Dictys as his poem draws to a close in order to paint a picture of legitimate political order. Despite Ulysses' fateful night of *amor* and his mortal *aventure*, the power of his good marriage to Penelope prevails, at least in part. His son, Telemachus, we are told,

reçut l'empire,
Après sa mort fu del tot sire;
Coronez fu a grant hautece.
Grant valor ot e grant proëce;

The poetics of *fine amor*

Sages fu mout e dreituriers;
Quatre vinz anz regna entiers.

(30263–68)

(Telemachus received the empire; After his [Ulysses'] death he was lord of all. He was crowned with great dignity. He had great courage and great military skill. He was wise and just. He ruled for eighty full years.)

To be sure, the joy of a good political order is muted in this last scene by all that has come before. Yet, in *Troie* as in the *Eneas* a rightful dynasty, based on *bone amor*, triumphs at the very end, at least for a time, over the forces of *aventure*, *destinee*, and destructive *fine amor*.

THE POETICS OF LOVE AND THE TRADITION OF THE ROMAN ANTIQUE

In their methods of invention, Benoît de Sainte-Maure and the *Eneas*-poet are not unique among twelfth-century clerkly poets. Both of them draw from the work of several classical *auctores*, skillfully disposing and elaborating their matter to serve their own formal and ethical interests. What *is* novel in their poems – and decisive for the tradition of the *roman antique* – is their *particular* collocation of classical “history” with the medievalized Ovidian matter of *fine amor*. Both poets use narrative fiction to explore the processes of history *in relation to* subjective, circumstantial, deeply felt sexual desire. In their first concern, which supports their audience’s eagerness to link themselves with ancient Greece and Rome, the twelfth-century romancers turn to epic writers and historians – Virgil, Statius, Lucan, and Dares. In the second, they follow the example of Ovid’s love poems, and particularly his *Heroides*; but they do not deliver their Ovid unattended by moral framing. Recounting the inner dramas of ancient lovers, they incorporate the attitudes of medieval commentators, who found in Ovid a full (and fully ethical) study of “all kinds of [erotic] love.”⁸⁷ By historicizing Ovid, they also reflect, like the glossators – though in much fuller, richer ways – a pervasive urge to explain in detail the narrative situations precipitating the lyric outbursts of their heroines and heroes.⁸⁸

Subsequent writers in the tradition of the *roman antique* do not simply copy their French forebears. They weave Ovid’s lyrical self-dramas and his art of love into the matter of ancient history in new ways to suit their own poetic agendas. Yet always in the tradition, the Ovidian materials catalyze explorations of interiority and sensibility, while, at the same time, the historical materials dictate a concern for temporal, narrative, and political processes. One prose redactor of Benoît’s *Troie* – whose version appears in an elegant manuscript of the *Histoire ancienne* commissioned by King Robert of Naples (c. 1340) – actually complicates his historical matter by

interpolating vernacular translations of thirteen *Heroides* and alluding to a fourteenth.⁸⁹ We cannot know whether Boccaccio used the prose translation of Benoît's *Troie* commissioned by King Robert, but he was certainly reading some version or versions of the twelfth-century French poem as he composed his *Filostrato*. In addition, he had direct recourse to Ovid's *Heroides* as well as his other love poems.⁹⁰ Robert Hollander has observed that "the presence of Ovid in Boccaccio outdistances all classical rivals and falls short only of that of Dante."⁹¹ That presence, as we shall see in the next two chapters, includes both Ovid's love poems and the medieval Ovid of the commentary tradition as Boccaccio elaborates the poetics of *fine amor* inherited, directly or indirectly, from the French *romans antiques*.

From history into fiction: Boccaccio's *Filostrato* and the question of foolish love

The literary path that leads from the twelfth-century feudal courts of northern France to the Angevin court at Naples, from Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie* to Boccaccio's *Filostrato* (c. 1335–40),¹ is not, in its broadest material outlines, difficult to trace. The Troy story, particularly in Benoît's version, enjoyed an enormous popularity in Italy.² Benoît's poem was copied by Italian scribes, and it was translated in the later thirteenth century into Latin by a southern Italian judge, Guido delle Colonne.³ Quite independently, Binduccio dello Scelto turned the *Roman de Troie* into Italian prose.⁴ Benoît's poem also made its way to King Robert's court at Naples in at least one French prose version – the translation mentioned at the end of the last chapter.⁵ But, while Boccaccio too takes up Benoît's matter of Troy in his *Filostrato*, his version, written in stanzas of *ottava rima*, seems remarkably different from all of its forebears in many respects.

The *Filostrato* has not generally won high praise among critics. Many scholars, isolating the poem's intense, subjective love interest, have tended to treat the whole work somewhat dismissively. It is, Barry Windeatt says, "a lyrically sensual romance . . . presented as a projection of the author's own scarcely-veiled feelings and experience through the character of Troilo."⁶ David Wallace concludes that although the Italian poem "provided Chaucer with an excellent story line . . . it had little to teach him as an opus."⁷ Wallace, moreover, reads the *Filostrato* as a "beautiful, amoral fantasy of love," "a youthful piece written in haste," "an efficient popular narrative."⁸

It is precisely as a brilliantly orchestrated, carefully constructed *opus*, however, rich with formal and ethical implications for Chaucer, that I take up the *Filostrato* anew in this chapter.⁹ The task of recovering the relationships between the literary traditions he had inherited and Boccaccio's early narrative of love, loss, and desolation is not a simple one. Our conclusions must be founded largely on inference and a recognition of

shared compositional practices rather than on explicit authorial testimony. Furthermore, whatever Boccaccio owes to earlier writers, his own inventive genius as well as his immediate intellectual and cultural situation contributed new ideas and new techniques to the tradition.¹⁰ Among the antecedents for the *Filostrato* must be counted at least the French *romans antiques*, Ovid's *Heroides*, *Ars amatoria*, *Remedia amoris*, and *Metamorphoses*, the later medieval tradition of the *questione d'amore*, continental lyric *chansons*, and the *Roman de la rose*, together with its Italian translations. Any task of archeological investigation in relation to a medieval text is likely to be incomplete and tentative in its conclusions. But without undertaking such a venture, we cannot hope to enter into or understand either the development of a literary tradition or the poems that use a given tradition as their principal point of departure. The reconstruction of the contexts is more laborious by far than the reading of the texts. Yet, if we are to appreciate the richness and specific pleasures of medieval poems as well as their place in one or more literary traditions, the labor is necessary.

As a poetic composition, Boccaccio's *Filostrato* anticipates what we might tend to consider a modern conception of the art work.¹¹ In Nabokov's definition, the young Italian poet instills his narrative with the "virtues that characterize all worthwhile art: originality, invention, harmony, conciseness, complexity, and splendid insincerity."¹² Yet, paradoxically, to achieve this effect, Boccaccio seems to have been looking backward to medieval schoolmasterly conceptions of certain classical poems as poetic "ficmenta" disguising ethical truth.¹³ As I argue in this chapter, the *Filostrato* presents a finely wrought, narrowly focused argument in defense of moral attitudes common to the *Roman de Troie*, the medieval *artes amandi*, and school commentaries on Ovid's love poems. Like Benoît de Sainte-Maure, though with a far greater intensity and concentration, Boccaccio concerns himself with the strategies and the folly of illicit, secret, Ovidian love and the treachery of women.¹⁴ Yet the poet's manipulations of narrative perspective, his play with various rhetorical forms, and his delight in designing his poetic *storia* mask his intention in such a way that modern readers have often missed his point.

In composing his *Filostrato* as a fiction in need of moral interpretation, Boccaccio seems to have drawn Ovid's *Heroides* even more fully than his French predecessors into the formal design of his poem. Like the *Eneas*-poet and Benoît de Sainte-Maure, the Italian poet dramatizes deeply felt Ovidian passion – what the northern French romancers had labeled "fine amor" and Boccaccio calls "perfetto amor" (*Filostrato*, I, 4). Like them too he interrogates the relationship between the lyrical drama of love

and the pressure of temporal (narrative) processes. But, going beyond his French predecessors, Boccaccio also uses the Ovidian love letters as a model for the form of his epistolary prologue and the voice and characterization of his dominant narrative persona.

The technical problem Boccaccio poses for himself in the *Filostrato* is as intriguing as it is decisive for his poem's dynamic. What if, following Ovid's example in the dramatized letters of the *Heroides*, the lover's perspective were to replace that of the clerkly narrator as the principal focus through which to present the *storia*? What if, by this means, narrative power and energy were shifted away from the fiction's moral *sententia* and given instead to characters who speak poetry but whose ethical judgment is clouded or flawed?¹⁵ Boccaccio was certainly aware, in some part, of the dangers such a strategy would involve. From the twelfth century onward, medieval commentators had regularly warned unwary readers of the *Heroides* against a naively literal interpretation of the epistles. Prefaces to the *Heroides* and/or glosses nearly always distinguish between the self-interested (often foolish or illicit) intention of each of Ovid's putative letter writers (the *intentio scribentis*) and the very different, moral *intentio auctoris*.¹⁶

Boccaccio offers no such explicit exegetical warning to his readers in the preface to his *Filostrato* or in the poem. Instead he allows the drama of his lover-protagonists' inner consciousness (including his narrator's) to create a lyrical poetic surface in need of rigorous analysis. Yet we do not look in vain, even in the *Filostrato*'s surface narrative, for the social and ethical concerns characteristic of the French *romans antiques* and medieval commentaries on Ovid's *Heroides*. They are pervasively present, but in a muted, oblique way. The diegetic and exegetic armature holding the poem together carries often-glancing reminders of values central to the French tradition and the Ovid commentaries – the public virtues and responsibilities demanded by war, the inevitable workings of “*fortuna invidiosa*,” the morality of legitimate marriage. In addition, like Ovid in the *Heroides*, Boccaccio has his lovers explicitly understand for us the moral consequences of the choices they make – the other side of the cases they argue. But the young lovers deliberately and consciously marginalize their moral concerns by the force of their interior monologues and their lyric passion.

In giving his lover-narrator and his ancient protagonists most of the “poetry,” Boccaccio puts his *Filostrato* forward as certain classical *auctores*, including Ovid, were said to have done. His poem is a self-consciously fictive *integumentum*, often painfully dark or clouded to its narrator and its ancient protagonists, but delightfully so to the Italian *autore*'s ideal readers. To construct his “poetic” integument, Boccaccio turns the narratorial

strategies characteristic of the French *Roman de Troie* inside out. He takes what I have called the inner perspective developed by Benoît de Sainte-Maure in his clerkly *Troie* and gives it primary dramatic force in his narrative. As lovers, his teller and his major characters, celebrating the lyric intensity of their passion, deliberately prefer *amor* to their responsibilities in the public realm. But, while Boccaccio's narrator and his pagan characters participate by the drama of their loves in constructing the fictive surface, his readers have the power to discover its moral significance or *sen*. By observing what the lovers reject, they can grasp the dangers of love within a larger social and ethical context.¹⁷

If Boccaccio uses his lover-narrator's and his characters' inner, private perspectives to obfuscate but also slyly to reveal his moral argument, he deploys his plot construction, his eight-line stanza, and a *collectio* of rhetorical forms to implicate his ethical interests in his poetic integument. With a remarkable sense of story, he takes up Benoît de Sainte-Maure's account of a woman's treachery in love. He then constructs a beginning and a conclusion for Troiolo's affair. The result is an economical, critical "biography" of the Trojan hero's love for Criseida from its inception until the sad recognition of its finale. The poet ingeniously disposes the stages of Troiolo's (typical) love affair within the respective stanzas, *parti*, discrete episodes, formal epistles, orations, and lyric *canzoni* of his poem. By replacing the discursive octosyllabic couplet of the French *romans antiques* and the prose of their thirteenth-century progeny, he emphasizes the "poetic" texture of his narrative.¹⁸ His *ottava-rima* stanzas imply his poem's *separateness* from ordinary language and from history.¹⁹ His composition as a composition is to operate at a distance from life. Within the poem as an artfully constructed meditative space, the reader is invited to uncover the author's academically based, ingenious powers of invention and disposition and, by silent, retrospective, analytic reading, to grasp the poem's moral wisdom.

It is clear from the testimony of the manuscripts that Boccaccio orchestrated his *Filostrato*, as he did his *Teseida*, to be *read* as a carefully designed composition.²⁰ In the best and earliest manuscripts, the poem is organized as an elegant book.²¹ The prefatory prose epistle is preceded by a rubricated description of the whole work. In the text of the poem proper, each of the nine *parti* is introduced by explanatory rubrics and a large colored or decorated capital. Each part is then subdivided into episodes of unequal length, and these episodes are separated from each other by rubrics describing the narrative content of the episodes. Moreover, each section of each part is marked by a colored capital. Colored initials in the margins also indicate the beginning of each stanza so that the reader is steadily aware of

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the stanzas *both* as discrete formal units *and* as participants in the narrative sequence. There is no extant holograph of the *Filostrato*, as there is of the *Teseida*, but the manuscript tradition clearly preserves much, if not all, of Boccaccio's original graphic design for his poem.²² Though some of the manuscripts do not include the rubrics, in a majority of cases, space has been left for them. We can be certain that Boccaccio placed the visual signs of division on the page – the indications of stanzas, episodes, and parts – as fundamental structuring devices, intended to guide his audience in discovering and remembering both the details of his narrative plan and the stages of his moral argument.

Because of Boccaccio's play with narrative focus, however, the *Filostrato* offers more than one level of entrance to its *stanze* and to the "regno d'amore." Readers can experience the poem's plot, its intensely elegiac poetry, and its implied moral lessons in a variety of different ways, depending on *their* intentions and predispositions as they approach the book. With his art of multiple perspective, Benoît de Sainte-Maure had paved the way for Boccaccio. In addition, as we have seen, all three authors of the French *romans antiques* had used their narratives to pose hypothetical circumstantial questions about secular moral values. But the Italian poet raises their art of fiction-making and ethical questioning to a new level of compositional complexity. His *Filostrato* is rigorously moral and simple at its most abstract level. The immediate force of its *historia*, however, focused through its lover-narrator and its protagonists, and its play with form invite initial attention to story and song rather than symbolic import.

To make such an argument requires careful demonstration, as the history of *Filostrato* criticism attests. Yet the demonstration is necessary if we are to understand more precisely than we have until now what Boccaccio contributed to the tradition of the *roman antique* and to the history of the Troy romances in particular. Boccaccio expands and embellishes Benoît's story of Troilus by turning to Ovid, the commentary tradition, and the medieval *artes amandi* for plot materials, ethical arguments, and narrative details. He also uses several highly contrived literary forms as the bases for structuring his poem: the Ovidian epistle or Heroid, the *questione d'amore*, and the lyric *canzone*. These very well known rhetorical forms, played against the history of Troiolo, are shown to participate in the illusion-making and fiction-making that, in Boccaccio's implied argument, coincide with foolish love. The inquisitory structure of the poem emphasizes the close connections between the writer's or rhetorician's formal manipulations of language and love's deceptions. As he brings together several related literary forms, Boccaccio gradually removes the reader (and Troiolo) from the goal sought in the narrative – a

permanent love union with Criseida and erotic fulfillment. His is a poem in which the "quest," momentarily brought to completion in Part III, as if in a dream, is progressively *unrealized* in Parts IV through VIII.

THE PROLOGAL EPISTLE

We are invited to enter the world of the *Filostrato* through a prologal prose epistle to a beloved lady, Filomena. I use the preposition "through" with the full force of its spatial meaning. As I have already suggested, Boccaccio conceives his fictive construction as a formal *locus*, set apart from the quotidian world. The *Filostrato* as a symbolic construct – a *picciolo libro* – draws us into an artificial environment so that we may consider and judge in a contemplative mood questions raised by the narrative. Much of our meditation on the poem's form and meaning will necessarily be retrospective. Ultimately, the poet requires us to retrace his own acts of literary invention if we are to appreciate his art as well as his poem's ethical argument to the full.

At first glance, the *Filostrato*'s prologal epistle appears to be a sincere, passionate, lyrical, quasi-autobiographical outpouring of deep feeling directed towards a certain Filomena.²³ Boccaccio replaces Benoît de Sainte-Maure's clerkly, sententious *exordium* or *accessus* with an apparently subjective, personal introduction.²⁴ The immediate effect of the prologal letter is to draw readers as voyeurs into the presence of the narrator's ardent desire for his absent Filomena. The epistle, addressed not to readers but to the lady, seems to give us privileged access to private, secret feeling.

Yet the letter itself is also subject to formal scrutiny precisely because it is an epistle, following both the form of the *Heroides* and the rules for letter writing laid out in the manuals of the medieval *ars dictaminis*.²⁵ When it is set within these traditions, the letter calls attention to its form and also to its dialogical character in relation to the poem.²⁶ As we study the *Filostrato* retrospectively, we observe just how intense a spirit of debate and inquiry the prologue initiates, not only between the narrator and his absent Filomena but also between itself, the poem, and the reader, and between past, present, and future time. Like his French predecessors in the form of the *roman antique*, Boccaccio borrows his elegiac first-person dramatization of love's pain from Ovid. Following the lead of the French poets, he also interrogates the validity of that suffering from an ethical point of view, but he does so in ingenious new ways.

The first sign that the *Filostrato*'s introductory epistle participates not only in the elegiac mode of the *Heroides* but also in the artifices and obliquities of the *ars dictaminis* is its style. Its long, convoluted sentences, its

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rhetorical exclamations, its extended similitudes imitate the indirect, artificial Latin of the curial style.²⁷ In addition, the letter conforms to the usual dictaminal rules for epistolary structure. Lacking a formal salutation, it begins with a *narratio* – but a narration that incorporates an organizing exordial *thema*. Although all three parts of the letter – *exordium*, *narratio*, and *petitio* – should appear in a correct epistle, the order is not fixed.²⁸ Thus the *exordium* need not be placed at the beginning, but may be included within the narration or the petition.²⁹ In his prologue, Boccaccio weaves the exordial praise of his lady into his extended “autobiographical” narration. And the letter concludes with a protracted elegiac petition for *pietà* to the absent Filomena.

In addition, adapting recommended practice, Boccaccio uses his *narratio* to introduce a question, and a question addressed not so much to Filomena as to the prospective readers of his poem other than his beloved lady. According to rules laid down by Guido Faba, for a “*sermo difficilis*,” the letter writer may want to include a proverb or *sententia* to emphasize the importance of the matter to be taken up.³⁰ This exordial *thema* will then give point to the specific facts of the *narratio* “by linking them to [a] general principle.”³¹ As Boccaccio applies this lesson in the *Filostrato*’s prologal epistle, he focuses his narration by introducing not a sententious principle but a well-known *questione d’amore*, one which will also govern the *narratio* of his poem in systematic but surprising ways.

THE PROLOGAL *QUESTIONE D’AMORE*

By bringing up his *questione*, Boccaccio inscribes one dialogical form within another. His epistle, ostensibly making a plea for love to Filomena, raises, at the same time, a playful but ultimately serious question of love for his audience. The letter’s narrator begins by identifying himself as one of several *quistionanti* in a court of love. The question posed is not new nor is its quasi-scholastic form original. As Boccaccio puts it, “gentle men and beautiful women,” in a court of love, “have heard brought forward and disputed this question, that is: a young man fervently loves a lady, from whom nothing else is allowed by Fortune except that either he can see her sometimes, or sometimes he can talk about her with someone, or can think sweetly to himself about her” (9). The question is a simple one, having to do, on the surface, with degrees of pleasure. Which provides the greater delight: to see one’s beloved or to think sweetly to oneself about her? This question, which also appears in the nearly contemporaneous *Filocolo*, acts in Boccaccio’s epistle as an ethically provocative focus through which to test and judge both the letter’s *narratio* and *petitio* and the narrative poem that

follows. In the story of Troiolo, the hero (and the poet) return again and again to the *questione d'amore* posed in the prologue, whether in lyric song or in conversation. Finally, once Criseida has betrayed her lover, the question is no longer playful or elegiac but philosophical, addressed not only to Filomena but also to the poem's larger audience. Was it worthwhile for Troiolo *ever* to have *seen* and thereby loved Criseida since women generally are treacherous and changeable?³²

We must examine the structure of the *questione d'amore* because it bears importantly on Boccaccio's conception of his fiction and his expectations for his readers. As we saw in chapter 2, the French *romans d'antiquité* had used both the *parleur* and the *chambre* for dramatized debates and trials. In both *Eneas* and *Troie*, dialectical questioning of motives and intentions, including inner debate in the privacy of the bedroom, occupies an important, even a central position in the narrative construction. Boccaccio is no less concerned, in his early romances, with a narrative poetry of intellectual debate and inquiry; but he nearly always prefers to pose his private, hypothetical *questioni* away from the public light of the court. Much more intensely than his French forebears in the tradition of the *roman antique*, he isolates the *quaestio*, understood in a scholastic sense, as the principal means through which to analyze his narrative fictions.³³ By means of his formal questions as well as his rhetorical play with literary forms, and his subjective, personally involved narrator, the Italian poet gradually provokes his readers to give up a naive, passive *lectio* in favor of "reacting, comparing, judging, digging to the bottom of the problem."³⁴

For Boccaccio's conception of the *questione d'amore*, which he uses as a central structural feature in his *Filostrato*, we need go no further than his *Filocolo*.³⁵ In that long prose romance, questions of love are isolated from the main narrative and developed according to a pattern based, probably, on Andreas Capellanus or one of his imitators.³⁶ Let us examine the structure of the *Filocolo*'s question XI, posed by a certain Graziosa, since it is the very one also raised by Boccaccio in his introductory letter in the *Filostrato*: "What is the greater pleasure to the lover, seeing the lady in person, or not seeing her but thinking lovingly about her?"³⁷

In the *Filocolo*'s fiction, the queen of the love court, Fiammetta, answers that "more pleasure is taken in thinking than in seeing." Her reason is this: Lovers can "experience a marvelous delight," and as it were "pleasurably satisfy their kindled desires in that thought" (IV, 60, 441). That is, thought can produce whatever erotic fantasy is imaginable. With sight, on the other hand, only the spirit of sight feels the good and stirs the other senses with such desire that they are overcome.

Graziosa, however, maintains the opposite position: "The thing that is

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loved delights more the more it is seen.” She adduces the narrative example, drawn from *Heroides* XIII, of Laodamia, who was melancholy when she could not see her husband, Protesilaus, and joyful when she could:

From Laodamia we can see and understand how much more seeing someone in person delights than does thinking about him, since we must believe that her thoughts never left her Protesilaus, and she was never seen other than melancholy on his account, refusing to adorn herself and put on precious clothing; and this never happened when she saw him, and she was always happy and gracious and adorned and festive when she was in his presence. (IV, 61, 442)

Graziosa’s process of rhetorical invention in buttressing her argument mirrors the act of invention described in the *Filostrato*’s prologal letter. Like the lover–narrator of the *Filostrato*, she mentally reviews ancient stories in order to “find” an authoritative classical *storia* which will support her judgment concerning the hypothetical case at hand.

In fact, in Ovid’s Heroid, Laodamia speaks precisely Graziosa’s argument. Writing to her absent husband, Protesilaus, who has left for Troy, she declares:

As long as I could look upon my lord, I was delighted to look; and unceasingly I followed your eyes with mine. When I could not see you, I could see your sails, and your sails held my gaze for a long time. But after I could see neither you nor your fleeing sails, and what I looked upon was nothing but the sea, the light too left with you. A darkness arose, my blood drained away, and I sank down, with failing knee, it is said, prostrate [to the ground]. (*Heroides* XIII, 17–24)

Here, Graziosa is interpreting the classical story fairly enough, uniting an ancient narrative with her solution to the *questione d’amore*. The fit between the Ovidian story and the theoretical solution to the question of love seems to be precise and persuasive.

Fiammetta, however, rejects the narrative example as well as Graziosa’s position. In her view, Laodamia’s story does not fit the case and fails to prove Graziosa’s point. As Fiammetta argues:

If you say that Laodamia was observed to be melancholy and pensive, we do not deny it; yet it was not amorous but sorrowful thought that disturbed her. Prescient, as it were, of his harms, she always thought and worried about the death of Protesilaus, and thought about it; and this is not one of those thoughts we are talking about, which her worry kept her from entertaining. (IV, 62, 443)

In other words, if we follow Fiammetta’s argument, had Laodamia indulged in fantasies of pleasure with her husband while he was away instead of worrying about him, she would have found the fantasies even

more delightful than his presence. Moreover, as Fiammetta explains the kind of amorous thoughts she has in mind, she distinguishes between their pleasures and the discomfiture often experienced at the actual sight of one's love. As she points out, seeing one's beloved

leaves neither thought nor spirit in its proper place. Many indeed, on looking at their ladies, have lost their natural strength and been overwhelmed, and many have been immobilized, unable to move; and others have tottered and fallen with their legs buckled, and others have lost their voice, and we know that many similar things have happened as a result of seeing. (IV, 62, 442-43)

This image of the love-struck young man, physically overcome at the sight of his beloved, is as comic as it is familiar to readers of medieval romance. We need think only of Boccaccio's Troilo and Chaucer's Troilus at their most passionately awkward to enjoy the validity of Fiammetta's argument.

The queen of the love court, interpreting in her own way the text Graziosa has adduced, maintains the superiority of amorous fantasies over actual sight:

When one has a sweet thought of the beloved in one's soul, in that very act which the thought extends to it, one thinks one is with the beloved. Then one sees her with those eyes from which nothing can be concealed on account of great distance. Then one speaks with her and perhaps speaks pathetically of past sorrows experienced for love of her. Then it is permissible to embrace her without any fear. Then one celebrates marvelously with her, according to one's desires. Then one can enjoy all pleasures with her. (IV, 62, 442)

The question posed and debated by Graziosa and Fiammetta is both witty and psychologically fascinating, and the debate is by no means resolved by Fiammetta's arguments. If the dialogue were to continue, Graziosa might well return to Laodamia's story, pointing out to Fiammetta that Laodamia had none of the physical difficulties described by Fiammetta when she enjoyed the presence and sight of her husband. The formal structure of the *questione* invites such analytic continuations from readers, although Boccaccio's courtly game in the *Filocolo* provisionally precludes them. Fiammetta is the queen and ruler and therefore brings the question to a (temporary) conclusion.

Within this structure, there is a lively, unresolved interplay between the general, theoretical question and a flexible, concrete narrative. As Boccaccio demonstrates through the form of his questions in the *Filocolo*, situational narratives can be interpreted in a number of different ways, depending on how one focuses one's attention. Graziosa concentrates on what Laodamia says; Fiammetta emphasizes the nature of her anxious thoughts which have nothing, in her view, to do with *amorosi pensieri*. Like

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all of the debates over *questioni d'amore* in the *Filocolo*, Graziosa's question and her narrative example provide a model for reading that accords well with medieval academic theories of writing and interpretation. The story at the center, like the account of Troilo in the *Filostrato*, invites *quaestiones* of a quasi-scholastic kind because the narrative situation is morally ambiguous or doubtful. Individual readers must turn over the actions of the characters in the case, judging for themselves their ethical quality and their significance both in the fiction and in relation to their own moral behavior.

When we turn to Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, we discover a precisely analogous structure. In the prologal letter, the same question is posed twice – first by the narrator as one of the *quistionanti* in a court of love, then at a later stage in his life after he has experienced his beloved's departure from his sight. As a young *quistionante*, he tells us, he had maintained the position (held by Fiammetta in the *Filocolo*) that amorous thoughts of the beloved give the greatest pleasure. Under the pressure of his Filomena's departure, however, he now defends the opposite position – that the actual sight of the beloved gives the greater delight. Like Graziosa, he brings forward a classical narrative example to support his case. Looking through *antiche storie*, he finds an account of Troilo's great sadness following Criseida's departure from Troy. This tale, in his view, demonstrates the truth of his argument even as it mirrors his own melancholy. As if to alert his readers to the possibility of alternative arguments, other readings of his classical exemplary tale, however, he admits that certain aspects of Troilo's story differ from his own situation. And it is partly these differences that will invite alternative interpretations from readers, judgments other than the narrator's, on the issues raised by the question and by the story.³⁸

Up to this point, I have considered two forms – the love epistle and the *questione d'amore* – central to the making of the *Filostrato*'s prologue and the poem as a whole. These forms provide a metaphoric threshold, as it were, drawing the reader out of ordinary time and place. The letter and the question both conspire to upset the world of statement by introducing problems, initiating dialogue, requiring response in a contemplative mood. The epistle, informed by the *questione d'amore* that governs it, initiates a pattern of inquiry. By their interactive relationship, both the letter and the question suggest in different ways that the reader's search, through the poetic fiction, for the ethical *intentio auctoris* will be neither direct nor simple.

CANZONI IN THE FILOSTRATO

Before entering into the formal (and literal) space of the poem proper and its narrative process, we must consider one more literary genre of key

importance to the structure of the *Filostrato*. In an important sense, the whole of the *Filostrato* develops outward from Troiolo's lyric "I" and the regular stanzaic form of the *canzone*. There are five formal love songs in the fiction, and the lover-narrator sings one song as the poem's concluding *congedo*.³⁹ Of the *canzoni* in the *Filostrato* proper, Troiolo speaks four while Pandaro invents one lyric for Troiolo in order to woo Criseida. What must interest us as we recognize the traditional character of these *canzoni* is their relationship to other rhetorical forms in the poem and to the progress of the plot. In fact, the seeming substance both of Troiolo's conventional lyric "I" and of the narrator's elegiac, Heroidian "I" in the prologal epistle and elsewhere are progressively called into question as the historical finality of Criseida's absence – and her betrayal – is uncovered. In the secrecy of the chamber, away from public scrutiny, divorced from fact and time, the lyric "I" enjoys a credibility and sympathy which larger exposure, comparison with other rhetorical forms and with history, will belie.

We may well begin with the first *canzone* of the *Filostrato*, the one composed, significantly enough, by Pandaro on Troiolo's behalf. Here, in three and a half skillful stanzas of apostrophe to the god of Love, we can observe the rhetorical "I" of troubadour lyrics, of medieval arts of love, and of model love letters *in the process of being invented*. Pandaro as a maker of persuasive fictions, a *dictator*,⁴⁰ and a *doctor amoris*, serves his "client" by speaking a song in his place. His *canzone* simulates, in a highly contrived, elegant form, the feelings, attitudes, and aspirations of Troiolo. The "I" of Pandaro's poem is obviously *his* invention. Troiolo has never sung such a song as far as we know, though Pandaro claims to be quoting his friend directly. Moreover, the "poet" also invents a story to frame "Troiolo's" *canzone*, one he believes will move Criseida more than the real facts would.

Astonishingly, Pandaro's *canzone*, together with the fictions he invents to frame it, are the immediate cause for Criseida's capitulation. As her response indicates, Pandaro's instincts as a *canzoniere* and storyteller are excellent:

. . . Di lontano,
il segreto scorgesti del suo petto,
come ch'el ferma poi tenesse mano
quando il trovasti pianger sopra il letto;
e così 'l faccia Iddio lieto e sano,
e me ancora, come per tuo detto
pietà me n' è venuta. Io non son cruda
come ti par, né sì di pietà nuda.

(II.65; my emphasis)

(From a distance, you discovered the secret of his breast, though he held it with a firm hand, when you found him weeping on his bed. So may God make him happy and well, and also

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me, as, through your words, pity has come to me. I am not hard, as it seems to you, nor so devoid of pity.)

Pandaro's poem and his fictional, hypothetical *storia* function as a go-between, just as Boccaccio's lover-narrator hopes *his Filostrato* will function, and just as the putative writers of Ovid's *Heroides* hoped, by their love letters, to lure their absent lovers.

A second *canzone*, also designed for *pietoso effetto*, this time sung by Troiolo himself in Part IV of the *Filostrato* (though written by Boccaccio), exemplifies, in a different way, the artifices involved in the lyric form and the poet's play with them in relation to his narrative frame. As Troiolo speaks his complaint, lamenting Criseida's imminent departure, the action comes to a halt.⁴¹ We are drawn into Troiolo's private chamber, "serrata e scura" (locked and darkened), and we listen to his heartfelt (albeit thoroughly formal) lament to Fortune, to Love, to Criseida, to Calcas (IV.30-40).⁴²

The complaining lover clearly does not plan any rhetorical stance for the occasion as Pandaro had done when he sang in his stead. Instead, his lyrically despondent mood springs from his immediate situation. The narrator uses an entire stanza to liken Troiolo to a bull ("saltando/ or qua or là") after he has received a mortal blow (IV.27). In just such a way, we are told, Troiolo beats his head against the wall, his face with his hands, his breast and aching arms with his fists. Setting aside the moral implications in this comparison of a man to a crazed beast, we may focus simply on the dramatic image. The picture of the railing, flailing young man, like a leaping bull, may well invite the reader's – even the sympathetic reader's – amusement. At last, all passion spent, the distraught lover falls down on his bed and, from this position, he utters his formal complaint.

The operatic *pianto* which follows is, on one level, as earnest as the beating Troiolo gives himself. Yet, the lament he utters demonstrates a remarkable sense of form in spite of his bullish behavior and his debilitating grief. The eleven stanzas of Troiolo's *canzone* organize themselves around the central sixth stanza, which begins as a formal address to his own eyes: "O dolenti occhi il cui conforto tutto/ di Criseida nostra era nel viso,/ che farete?" (O sorrowful eyes, whose entire comfort was in Criseida's face, what will you do?) (IV.35.1-3). These lines touch directly the *questione d'amore* posed in the prologal letter. What will the lover do since he cannot see his lady? This stanza, then, serves as a pivot for the rest of the complaint. In the stanzas surrounding the central one, Troiolo successively condemns Fortune, prays to *Amor*, admonishes his soul, addresses Criseida, and berates Calcas, whom he wishes dead.

If Pandaro's *canzone*, invented on Troiolo's behalf, raises questions about the identity and stability of the lyric "I," so too does this song as well as the

hero's other formal laments. While the problems of Pandaro's lyric "I" are rhetorical, however, the questions about Troiolo's are existential. Most of the hero's songs bring explosions of elaborately poetic speech together with the subjects of absence and death. At the center of the whole poem, in the last stanza of one such *canzone* (iv.62), Troiolo begs death to slay him:

[Morte] Uccidimi, per Dio, non consentire
 ch'io viva tanto in questo mondo, ch'io
 il cuor del corpo mi veggia partire:
 deh, fallo, morte, i' ten priego per Dio,
 ch'assai mi dorrà quel più che 'l morire:
 contenta in questa parte il mio disio;
 tu n'uccidi ben tanti oltre al volere,
 che ben puoi fare a me questo piacere. (1-8)

([Death] slay me, for God's sake, do not permit me to live so long in this world that I see my heart deprived of my body. Ah, do it, death, I pray you for God's sake, since it will grieve me more than dying. Satisfy my desire in this respect. You slay so many against their will that you can well do me this favor.)

The collocation of highly wrought language with the subject of absence and death in this *canzone* and other songs sung by Troiolo is not coincidental. It draws us to one important moral definition of the elegy and of Ovidian poetry in a narrow sense as Boccaccio exposes them both gradually in the *Filostrato*. The hero of his poem, as a bereft lover, is a "timido donzello," "volendo e non volendo or questo or quello" (timid young nobleman, wishing now this, now that). He appears successively as a "lily uprooted by a plow," a creature "più morta . . . que viva" (more dead than alive), a bull mortally wounded, "in amorosa erranza" (in amorous wandering). As they accumulate, Boccaccio's conventional descriptions and comparisons are self-negating. The "I" who speaks the lyric laments claims to have no substance, characterizing himself mainly by his sense of unfulfilled desire.

While Boccaccio reserves his explicit remedial moral commentary on Troiolo's love largely for Part VIII of his *Filostrato*, he nonetheless implicates a powerful critique through the course of his narrative, beginning with the initial titular description of Troiolo as *Filostrato*, "one overcome by love."⁴³ The poem's first movement or *parte* traces the process of conquest – Troiolo's passage from freedom to servitude. In the lover's several *canzoni*, as well as his elegiac letters and his conversations, then, we observe the effects of his bondage. Certainly, if Troiolo's lyrics existed as isolated, discrete moments, their intensity would probably go unquestioned. But the poet frames them within a carefully ordered, time-bound *storia* precisely in order to expose the moral and even the existential insubstantiality of the lyric "I" in love.⁴⁴

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THE INVENTION AND DISPOSITION OF THE *FILOSTRATO*'S PART I

Earlier in this chapter, I suggested that Boccaccio designed his account of Troiolo as a critical *ars* and *remedia amoris*, following a tradition initiated in part by the twelfth-century French *romans antiques*. The evidence for this contention is most persuasive, I think, when we look closely at the Italian poet's process of inventing his *storia* and disposing it in the eight narrative *parti* of the *Filostrato*.

Boccaccio explicitly identifies the core of his narrative inspiration for us in his prologal epistle. In browsing through old stories, he tells us, he has found a tale that bespeaks his own state of sorrow – the story of Troiolo's grief at Criseida's departure from Troy. This story of an affair's end was invented, as far as we know, by Benoît de Sainte-Maure. Neither in Benoît nor in subsequent French and Italian prose translations and redactions of *Troie*, however, is there any mention of the beginning of Troilus' love for Briseida.

When Boccaccio takes up Benoît's story of the affair's conclusion in separation and betrayal, he places it at the structural center of the *Filostrato*. Of his nine *parti*, the middle three (iv, v, and vi) develop the narrative inherited directly or indirectly from Benoît – Criseida's parting from Troiolo and her subsequent capitulation to the suit of the Greek warrior, Diomedes. From this center, then, Boccaccio builds out in two directions, creating a beginning and a denouement for the love affair. The first three parts of the *Filostrato* and the last three appear to be original with Boccaccio. Moreover, these two original segments bear an exact proportional relationship to each other. The first three parts, 2,342 lines or 294 stanzas, detail the rise of love; the last three parts, 1,176 lines or 147 stanzas – exactly half the number of the first three parts – record its end. A *crescendo* movement, swelled by fulsome rhetoric, interior debate, epistles, lyric songs, is countered by a *diminuendo* movement which arrives, finally, at the fact of Criseida's infidelity.

Before considering how Boccaccio might have formed the first and last movements of the *Filostrato* (Parts I–III and VII–IX), let us suppose that he began composing his story at the center, beginning with Benoît's plot of separation and betrayal. What are his habits of amplification and emphasis as he adapts, alters, and embellishes the received account of Criseida's departure in the *Roman de Troie*? The question of artistic invention and disposition is generally a fascinating one in relation to medieval writers, and Boccaccio does not disappoint us. His calculated expansion and disposition of a received story reach far beyond the technical ambition of

the French *romans antiques*. In his play with forms and his narrative invention in the *Filostrato*, he establishes new possibilities in the tradition we are tracing, possibilities that directly prepare for Chaucer.

FILOSTRATO, PARTE IV: CRISEIDA'S DEPARTURE

By comparing the action of Boccaccio's Part IV with the texts of Benoît and his translators, we can determine what the Italian poet actually did to the narrative inherited from the *Troie* tradition and for what reasons. The *Filostrato*'s Part IV begins just where Benoît's story of Troilus and Briseida begins, with Calcas' request for his daughter. It ends with Troilo and Criseida's last night together, an event Benoît also records, albeit briefly.

Certain differences strike us at once. Most obviously, in Benoît's account and in all earlier versions, the whole story of the two lovers' separation occupies an incidental position in the narrative. Benoît gives his account of Calcas' request and the lovers' last night in just over a hundred lines of third-person narration and indirect discourse. Boccaccio, locating the departure scene and its aftermath at the very center of his composition, expands his Part IV to more than thirteen times the length of the French version – 167 stanzas, 1,336 lines. Moreover, most of Boccaccio's additions to his French antecedent are dramatized speeches or links between speeches. In fact, three-quarters of Part IV is given over to a mimetic mode of presentation, either in the form of various rhetorical constructs (speeches and *canzoni*) organized as *coningationes stantiarum* or as conversational debate.⁴⁵ Not surprisingly, the first major elaboration of the received story in Part IV exposes, if only in retrospective analysis, the treachery frequently involved in formal "poetic" constructs.

In Benoît and his imitators, Calcas' request for his daughter is very briefly reported. Boccaccio, by contrast, dramatizes the event at some length. Very near the beginning of Part IV (4–13), he shows us Calcas, first formulating a persona and a voice for the occasion, then delivering a carefully constructed oration. Calcas speaks by the book, but he infuses received rhetorical lessons with a brilliant, melodramatic élan. The old prophet's speech is explicitly designed for a *pietoso effetto* (pathetic impression). His first step in achieving this effect is to put on a "cambiata faccia" (changed visage) and to speak "con pianto sonoro" (with a deep sigh). "Umile nel parlare e nell'aspetto" (humble in speech and appearance), he also weeps so that his beard and breast are bathed in tears (IV.4). The speech itself is a masterpiece of self-effacement and strategic distortion for the sake of persuasion. Boccaccio's stanzaic structure – his *ottava rima* – elegantly slows and formalizes the speech, marking out its key divisions.

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Calcas begins with a *captatio benevolentiae*, reminding the Greeks of the ways in which he has helped them (iv. 5–7). Then he tells the story (the rhetorical *narratio*) of his *figliuola giovinetta* – sadly left behind in Troy by a *padre duro*. The image of Criseida as a “young daughter” is not one we readily associate with the widow who is Troiolo’s lover; yet it suits the orator’s need. Calcas compounds the *pietosa* situation in his concluding *petitio* by depicting himself as a “vecchio cattivo” (old wretch), who “d’ogni altro sollazzo è voto e privo” (deprived and emptied of every other solace), (iv. 10). Who, among the Greeks, could deprive the pathetic old man of his little daughter? In the event, none can. At the end of Calcas’ speech, “tutti gridaron: Diaglisi Antenore” (all cry out, give them Antenor) (iv. 12–18).

A highly contrived rhetorical form, skillful self-dramatization, and verbal strategies for the sake of a *pietoso effetto* are the principal characteristics of Calcas’ persuasive speech at the beginning of Part iv. Just as Boccaccio had used a formal epistle to preface his poem, so here he invents a strategically formulated oration to introduce and frame the subject of Criseida’s departure. While we may be inclined at first glance to accept the “sincerity” of the prologal epistle, we can have no doubt in examining Calcas’ speech that the oratorical form itself encourages play-acting, ambiguity, and dissimulation. Form and *effetto* take precedence over matters of moral and historical truth.⁴⁶

Criseida, in Boccaccio’s depiction of her in Part iv, resembles her father. She manipulates language, and, by her manipulations, she colors reality. During the lovers’ last night together, Criseida imagines for Troiolo several situations which might enable the lovers to meet again. The Greeks and Trojans will make peace; there will be a truce; her father will allow her to return. As Troiolo listens to his lady’s arguments, Boccaccio focuses on Criseida’s power to persuade:

Troilo attento la donna ascoltava,
ed il dir suo gli toccava la mente,
e quasi verisimil gli sembrava
dover ciò che diceva certamente
esser così.

(iv. 137.1–5)

(Troilus, attentive, listened to the lady, and her speech touched his spirit, and it seemed to him that what she said, as if like reality, must certainly be so.

Boccaccio’s language is telling. The speech, *quasi verisimil*, persuades Troiolo in spite of his doubts, but only for a short interlude of *amorosa danza*. The hero’s fears overtake him. He puts forward his own arguments, doubting that Criseida will ever return, and he suggests flight.

In her long rebuttal, Criseida concludes with an argument directly drawn

from Ovid and the medieval *artes amandi*: "Il nostro amor che cotanto ti piace,/ è per ch'el ti convien furtivamente/ e di rado venire a questa pace" (Our love is so pleasing to you because it must be carried on secretly and because it is possible to come to this peace rarely) (iv.153.1-3). Only secret love lasts. As Andreas Capellanus puts it in his *De amore*, love can be increased "by making it an infrequent and difficult business for lovers to set eyes on each other, for the greater the difficulty of offering and receiving shared consolations, the greater becomes the desire for, and feeling of, love."⁴⁷ By the same token, love is diminished "through the easy accessibility of its consolations."⁴⁸

It should be noted here that the Ovidian secrecy, so important to Troilo's love affair from the moment Pandaro intervenes in Part II of the *Filostrato*, is entirely Boccaccio's addition to the received account. In Pandaro's early discussions of secrecy, he emphasizes the illicit nature of the love even as he downplays it. Yet the love he fosters is, like Ovid's, explicitly *lascivus* and *furtus*. This emphasis, like so much else in the poem, suggests the direct influence of Ovid's cynical poetry in Boccaccio's ordering of his narrative. But at the same time the poet organizes his plot as an historical love tragedy. The tragic narrative, then, calls for moralizing commentary (largely reserved for Part VIII) of the kind one finds in medieval arts of love, in glosses on Ovid's love poems, and in the French *romans antiques*.

Following her argument in favor of continued secrecy (and difficulty) in their love, Criseida promises Troilo (in a promise she will not keep) that she will return on the tenth day after her departure (154). The art of the grand but empty promise also belongs to Ovid. In his *Ars amatoria*, he advises the lover: "Make bold promises. These are the promises that attract women. Take all the gods as witness to your oaths. From on high Jupiter laughs at the perjuries of lovers" (*Ars*, 1.629-31). Jason's promise to Medea in Benoît's *Roman de Troie* falls into this category; so too do the affectionate words and meaningless promises made by Diomedes to Briseida in Guido delle Colonne's Latin translation of Benoît (*Historia*, 164). It is Criseida's Ovidian promise, invented by Boccaccio for Part IV of his *Filostrato*, that will provide the conceptual framework of illusion and false hope for the poem's long account of fruitless anticipation in Part VII.

FILOSTRATO, PARTE V: TROILO'S LYRIC RESPONSE

After all the poetry of Part IV – the lamentation, the debate, the lyric song, the public oratory – the last stanza swiftly summarizes the lovers' final parting as prosaic historical fact: "E così dipartirsi lagrimando" (And so

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they parted from each other weeping) (IV.167). Again, early in Part v, in stark, diegetic summary, the narrator confirms the finality of Criseida's departure:

. . . e se n'uscio
di Troia, nella qual giammai tornare
più non dovea, né con Troiolo stare. (v.9.6-8)

(she left Troy to which she would never return, nor would she be with Troiolo.)

He foretells too Criseida's betrayal, as Benoît and the other Troy romancers do: "tosto si dovea permutare,/ e lui per nuovo amante abbandonare" (she was soon to change and to abandon him for a new lover) (v.14.7-8). Against these simple, harsh, historical facts, the poet will play all the mimetic rhetoric of Troiolo's lamentations and empty hopes, Pandaro's consolations, Diomedes' courtship. Indeed, from this point on in the narrative, the distance between history and lyric desire becomes ever wider, ever more apparent.

As if to underscore the emptiness of hope and Pandaric consolation which will be the principal subjects of Parts v and vii of his *Filostrato*, the poet periodically punctuates Troiolo's lyric outbursts with images and statements of fact: Troiolo's dreams of his own solitude, of falling from a great height, of flight, of entrapment at the hands of fierce enemies (v.26-27); Criseida's closed house (52); the whole of Troy now devoid of Criseida (54-58); Pandaro's explicit surmise that Criseida will not return even within a year (59).

After Criseida's actual departure at the beginning of Part v, Troiolo spends a day and night alone in formal, operatic lamentation. Then Pandaro arrives with advice drawn largely from the *Remedia amoris*. Ignore melancholic dreams; turn, he advises Troiolo, to other delights, other ladies, as an antidote to sadness (v.30-34). As Ovid counsels in his *Remedia*: "Whoever you are who love, solitary places are harmful. Beware of solitary places. Whither do you flee? You will be safer in a community . . . a crowd will be a help to you. Cling to a good companion. If alone, you will be sad, and the shape of your deserted mistress will stand, as if herself, before your eyes" (lines 579-84). Pandaro arranges a visit to the home of Sarpedon where Troiolo is royally entertained with the company of "belle donne," with "canti e suoni" (v.41). But nothing avails. Troiolo wants only to return home, to lament his absent Criseida, to visit the places in Troy where he has *seen* Criseida, to show in *versi* the cause of his suffering.

Above all, recalling the central *questione d'amore* around which the *Filostrato* is constructed, the bereft lover remembers, *cantando*, his lady's *begli occhi*. In one anguished address to love, he wishes only for death,

"trovandomi partuto/ da quei begli occhi" (finding myself separated from those beautiful eyes) (v.63.7-8). In another discourse, "seco . . . ragionando," (debating within himself) he remembers where Criseida "con gli occhi belli e vaghi" (with the beautiful and charming eyes) captured his love (v.55.1-8).⁴⁹

In thus extending Troiolo's grief after Criseida's departure to occupy an entire *parte*, Boccaccio substantially postpones the condemnation of Criseida and women in general, common to all earlier redactions and translations of Benoît's story of Troiolo.⁵⁰ Yet, the clerical, antifeminist argument developed in the French tradition of the *roman antique* and the *ars amandi* is no less central to the Italian poem. Parts v, vii, and viii of the *Filostrato* provide a narrative demonstration of Troiolo's self-deceiving foolishness. The lesson is all the more powerful in Boccaccio's poem because Troiolo, with his limited, subjective point of view, comes to see Criseida's faithlessness for himself by means of a painful process of discovery. Only when his hero has discovered, by a direct visual confrontation with the evidence of the brooch, the truth of his lady's betrayal, will the narrator, sharing his discovery with his readers, conclude Part viii with a bitter condemnation of treacherous women.

FILOSTRATO, PARTE VI: DIOMEDES' COURTSHIP AND
CRISEIDA'S CAPITULATION

Part vi of the *Filostrato* draws us formally and metaphorically into a new "space" or segment of the poem and literally into a new setting – an *altra parte* on the seashore, where Criseida *stava* (iv.1). The change of locus coincides with a change of subject as Boccaccio takes up Diomedes' rhetorical courtship of Troiolo's lady. Before dramatizing the verbal process that changes Criseida's heart, however, the poet allows his heroine seven stanzas of lamentation. Her lament contains one of Benoît de Sainte-Maure's dominant antifeminist contentions, namely that women seize on pleasure and despise pain, readily escaping it whenever possible.⁵¹ As if to confirm the truth of Benoît's argument by dramatizing it, Boccaccio's Criseida looks back towards Troy and declares:

Oh me, quanta gioia,
quanto piacere e quanto di dolcezze
n'ebb'io già dentro, ed ora in trista noia
consumo qui le mie care bellezze! (vi.4.3-6)

(Alas, how much joy, how much pleasure, and how much sweetness I once had within [the walls of Troy]! and now I consume here my precious beauties in sad anxiety.)⁵²

To her feminine love for pleasure, Boccaccio adds Criseida's (Ovidian and Horatian) interest in seizing the day, using her beauty while time avails. If

she longs for lost pleasure in the fourth stanza of Part vi, grieving over her wasted beauty because of her separation from Troiolo, by stanza 8, we are told, "da sì alto e grande intendimento/ tosto la volse novello amadore" (from so high and great an intention a new lover quickly turned her) (vi.8.1-2). Unlike Benoît and his translators, the Italian poet offers no direct moral commentary on Criseida's behavior at this point. Nonetheless, a critique is implied by proportion. While Troiolo, in Part v, laments for seventy-one stanzas, Criseida's grief at the beginning of Part vi lasts for seven. Moreover, Diomedes manages to change the lady's heart in the compass of twenty-four stanzas.

The process by which Diomedes seeks Criseida's love and she grants it (vi.11-34) once more demonstrates for us Boccaccio's deep, academically inspired interest in rhetorical dissimulation and treachery as well as his borrowing from Ovid. The Diomedes bequeathed to him by Benoît is a straightforward chivalric lover, who simply and directly presents his suit to Briseida as soon as he has led her away from Troilus. Guido delle Colonne darkens the portrait somewhat. In his version, Diomedes offers his love to Briseida "in multis affectuosis sermonibus et blandiciis necnon promissionibus . . . magnificis . . . satis humiliter" (in many affectionate speeches and also flattering, lofty promises . . . humbly enough) (*Historia*, 164). In both the French original and its translations, Diomedes also slyly steals one of Briseida's gloves, an act which, we are told, the lady secretly likes. In his "translation," Boccaccio greatly elaborates Diomedes' skill in the art of love, linking his performance implicitly with Ovidian instruction.

In order to discern precisely the shape and therefore the moral significance Boccaccio gives Criseida's new love affair from its inception, we must turn to the fateful moment in Part v when Diomedes first sees Criseida. Diomedes' attraction for Criseida in the *Filostrato* begins when he observes her parting from Troiolo and guesses that the two are lovers (v.12-13). But Boccaccio alters the parting scene inherited from Benoît and his successors. In the *Roman de Troie*, Benoît describes a touching conversation between Troilus and Briseida as the two exchange verbal promises of true love.⁵³ Curiously enough, Boccaccio, who is generally so much given to the addition or expansion of speeches, does not imitate this conversation at the moment of parting. Instead, he shows us the two lovers silently gazing into each other's eyes, taking one another by the hand. As the two part, Troiolo whispers a single desperate plea to Criseida.

What, we must ask, underlies Boccaccio's striking change of a received scene? On the face of it, the parting conversation between the two lovers would seem to be just the sort of verbal exchange the Italian poet would relish, translate, and expand. Instead Boccaccio emphasizes the eyes, a tactic that pointedly recalls the *Filostrato*'s central question of love. The

complex of *non-verbal* gestures also serves to reveal the secret love to Diomedes, who is looking on. For him, the gestures have an erotic function. Observing “l’amor de’ due” (the love of the two), we are told, he is smitten by Criseida “nascosamente” (secretly) (v.13).

It seems very likely that in forming this scene Boccaccio was thinking not only of the *questione d’amore* about seeing *versus* thinking of one’s lover that governs his poem’s prologal letter, but also of another well-known question posed in medieval love debates. This second question, I believe, not only determines the lineaments of Criseida’s departure scene but also contributes to the poet’s characterization of her as a widow in the poem as a whole. The question of love, as the troubadours had put it, is this: is it better to love an inexperienced maiden or a lady who has loved before? Now this question is very much like another which bears essentially on Boccaccio’s formulation of Criseida’s character in the *Filostrato*: Is it better to love a widow, a married woman, or a maiden?

As everyone knows, Boccaccio transformed Benoît’s *pucele*, Briseida, into his *vedova*, Criseida. Moreover, he dresses his heroine in *bruna vesta* which coincides with her status as a widow. For the source of the *bruna vesta* we may turn to Ovid’s *Ars amatoria*. There, in Book III, which he devotes to instructions for ladies on love, Ovid recommends dark outfits because they are particularly becoming against white skin, and he uses Briseida as his example:

Pulla decent niveas: Briseida pulla decebant:
Cum rapta est, pulla tum quoque veste fuit. (III, 189–90)

(Snow-white skins like dark colors, dark grey became Briseida; even when she was carried off, her robe was dark grey.)

As to the question of love bearing on experienced *versus* inexperienced lovers – maidens, married women, or widows – we can look to Boccaccio’s own *Filocolo*.⁵⁴ Among his *questioni d’amore* in Fiammetta’s garden, question XI deals with just this issue. As Ferramonte puts it: “disidero da sapere da voi, di cui più tosto un giovane, per più felicemente il suo disio ad effetto condocere, si dee innamorare di queste tre, o di pulcella o di maritata, o di vedova” (I want to know from you which of these three – a maiden, a married woman, or a widow – a young man ought to fall in love with, through whom most quickly to bring his desire to fulfillment) (433). In other words, Ferramonte wants to know which of the three will make the easiest, happiest conquest.

The queen judges that widows are best, since wives are forbidden territory, and maidens, “rozze e grosse a tale mestiere” (untrained and

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clumsy at such an art), are able to satisfy men's desires only "con molto affanno" (with great effort) (434).

Ferramonte, however, enters a cautionary note about widows, one that has an important bearing on Criseida:

La vedova . . . ha vedute e sentite molte cose d'amore, e i suoi dubbii, e quanta vergogna e onore seguiti di quello; e però, queste cose meglio che la pulcella conoscendo, o ama lentamente e dubitando, o, non amando fermo, disidera ora questo ora quello. (435)

(The widow . . . has seen and felt many of love's aspects, both its fears and how much shame and honor follow from it; and therefore, knowing these things better than the maiden, either she loves slowly and fearfully, or, not loving steadfastly, she desires now this [man], now that.)

We can reconstruct Boccaccio's invention of Criseida as follows. Ovid's description of Briseida (known to have had multiple lovers), dressed in dark clothes to enhance her beauty, coalesces in his imagination with the figure of the widow in her mourning weeds. At the same time a question of love, essentially concerned with ease of seduction in relation to widows *versus* maidens, presents itself. From this *collectio* of materials, belonging to the Ovidian and medieval traditions of the *ars amandi*, Boccaccio's Criseida emerges. As a lady of great experience in love, she appeals to Diomedes in the scene we have been examining precisely because he recognizes that she *is* experienced. Diomedes' erotic interest in Criseida is first aroused *because* he observes through secret but visible signs that she is already a lover. The coloring Boccaccio gives his heroine's character and Diomedes' in this moment is subtle. But it coincides with other, similar touches. The Criseida who emerges under his pen – a widow, well-schooled in the strategies of love, a writer of empty letters – is no paragon of virtue. She falls easily and often in just the way Ovid and his medieval successors suggest women will.

But what of Diomedes' rhetorical style in courting Criseida? With Boccaccio's Diomedes, timing and thought are of the essence in wooing. Before ever he embarks on his suit, he waits a few days (vi.9). Having found reason to visit Criseida, he sizes up the situation. One would have to be a "sovrano artista" (superlative artist), he concludes, in order to drive her other lover from her mind. Nonetheless, he proposes to try, though he comes to the point of his argument, as the narrator puts it, "di lungi assai" ([beginning] at a great distance [from it]) (vi.11.8).

In eleven stanzas of oratory (not to mention the unrecorded part of his speech), Diomedes deftly plays on his hidden knowledge of Criseida's Trojan love. He advises her to forget him, whoever he may be, since the Greeks will certainly win the war. Moreover, whatever the outcome of the

war, the Trojans are barbaric, while Greek love is more noble and perfect, worthy, therefore, of Criseida's great beauty. Before bringing his speech to a close, the young Greek lover affects embarrassment. He blushes, his voice shakes, and he stares down at the ground. Then, for a finale, in arguments close to those of Paris in *Heroides* xvi, he offers his noble lineage for Criseida's consideration.

Criseida, in her turn, delivers a speech, shorter by six stanzas than Diomedes', but no less calculated. She too affects a persona. As a widow, full of a sense of shame, protecting her honor, she speaks with few words punctuated by pauses "as Diomedes' speech required." Her argument turns on a lie (that she has remained loyal in love to her dead husband) and an Ovidian piece of practical advice: "l'uom dee guardare/ tempo e stagion quando altrui vuol pigliare" (a man ought to regard the time and the season when he wants to capture another) (vi.31.7.-8).⁵⁵ When Diomedes interprets Criseida's temporizing speech, he rightly reads in it hope for his cause.⁵⁶ While Criseida has maintained the forms of honor in her oratory, she has given her suitor good reason to find solace in her widely spaced words.

After only thirty-three stanzas of lament and courtship, Part vi comes to an abrupt conclusion with the narrator's brusque assertion: "queste piegare il suo animo intero/ . . . / e da queste cagion sommossa, avvenne/ che la promessa a Troiolo non attenne" (these things turned her whole spirit . . . And, moved by these arguments, it happened that she did not keep her promise to Troiolo] (vi.34.3, 7-8). The very brevity of Part vi bespeaks Criseida's lightness in her commitment as well as Diomedes' virtuosity in wooing.

FILOSTRATO, PARTI I-III AND VII-VIII: BOCCACCIO'S ART OF INVENTION

If Boccaccio developed his narrative of Troiolo in love to enclose a self-critical *ars amandi*, then we should expect to find in the first three *parti* of the story, and the last two, clear formal and material signs of the poet's intention. These are the portions of the work which seem to be entirely Boccaccio's invention. Not surprisingly, both the opening and closing sections of the narrative draw key ideas, characterization, and storial details both from Ovid himself and from his medieval successors and commentators. Moreover, these borrowings are not ornamental but essential to the development of the poem. Three of them – all belonging as much to the most important medieval *artes amandi* as to Ovid – warrant special comment. The first of these is the character of Pandaro, who dominates the action of Parts II and III, but is reduced at last to silence in Part VIII. The

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second is the grand but empty promise made by Criseida in Part iv, which generates the whole action of Troiolo's desperate wait for her in Part vii. And the third is the brooch or *fermaglio* on which the action of Part viii turns. It is this brooch, it will be remembered, that finally causes Troiolo to recognize Criseida's betrayal of their love.

FILOSTRATO, PARTE VII: TROILOLO'S WAIT FOR CRISEIDA AND HIS ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

The whole of Part vii depends on Criseida's firm but ultimately empty Ovidian promise in Part iv that she will return to Troy after ten days in order to continue her secret love affair with Troiolo (iv.154). In the course of *parte vii*, we witness the hero's wishful expectation of her return (1-22); his dream of the wild boar and his (correct) reading of it as Criseida's betrayal (23-30); his attempted suicide on account of jealousy and Pandaro's timely intervention (32-50); Troiolo's long letter to Criseida (an Ovidian Heroid in its form and content) asking her about her promise (52-75); his spirited albeit misguided defense of Criseida addressed to Cassandra, who has condemned his *maladetto amor* (89-101); and Criseida's empty letters to Troiolo (only summarized), full of *false scuse* and further feigned promises of return (105).

As I have already pointed out, Criseida's promise to Troiolo in Part iv belongs to the advice Ovid gives to lovers in his *Ars amatoria* concerning the usefulness of false promises. In Part vii, Boccaccio poignantly dramatizes the emptiness of the lady's promise by juxtaposing Troiolo's hope with Pandaro's knowledge that Criseida will not return. Even after the ten days have expired, Troiolo continues his vigil at the gate, finding excuses for Criseida's delay, until one night he dreams of her betrayal. The dream, then, provides the occasion for jealousy which, in its turn, precipitates the lover's attempt at suicide as he snatches a knife and tries to stab himself. Pandaro, who is with him as counselor and consoler, manages with some struggle to snatch the knife from his hands in the nick of time (vii.36). As the rubric introducing this episode puts it: "Vede Troiolo in sogno Criseida essergli tolta, rammaricarsi di lei con Pandaro e vuolsi uccidere, e a gran pena è da lui ritenuto" (In a dream, Troiolo sees Criseida being taken from him, complains of her to Pandaro, and wants to kill himself; and he is restrained by him with great difficulty) (vii, preceding stanza 23). Pandaro's act of restraint at an attempted suicide – his most important single gesture in the final movement of the *Filostrato* – illustrates very well Boccaccio's brilliance in transforming an Ovidian paradigm into story.

In the proem to his *Remedia*, Ovid had explained that his remedial art would save those bound to an unworthy mistress and a miserable love from death at their own hands, either by hanging or by means of a "rigido ferro" thrust into their breast (15–22). When, in stanza 33, Troiolo seizes a "coltello . . . aguto" (later called a "ferro" [35.8; 36.6]) from the wall and threatens to thrust it "per lo petto," he is raising, through a dramatic act, Ovid's remedial question regarding disappointed lovers: "Cur aliquis rigido fodit sua pectore ferro?" (Why has one pierced his breast with an unbending sword?) (19). At the same time Pandaro takes upon himself the principal purpose of the *Remedia* as Ovid and his medieval commentators had described it. He literally saves his friend, who has followed the art of love beyond its proper limit, from an untimely suicide due to misery in love.⁵⁷

FILOSTRATO, PARTE VIII: THE INVENTION OF THE BROOCH

When we turn to Part VIII of the *Filostrato*, we discover that a medieval Ovidian commonplace generates the narrative line of that key *parte* in a parallel way. The central object and symbol in Boccaccio's Part VIII is the *fermaglio*, through which Troiolo comes to know Criseida's betrayal as fact. Until Part VIII, Troiolo's fateful gift to Criseida is not mentioned at all. We first hear of it as Deifobo parades through the streets of Troy, displaying a *vestimento* decorated with a brooch. Deifobo has seized the garment from the seriously wounded Diomedes during a battle and he brings it back to Troy as war booty. When Troiolo sees the brooch on Diomedes' cloak, he recognizes it as a gift he had given to Criseida:

. . . avvenne
che esso vide nel petto un fermaglio
d'oro, li posto forse per fibbiaglio.
Il quale esso conobbe incontanente,
sì come quei che l'aveva donato
a Criseida, allora che dolente
partendosi da lei, preso commiato
quella mattina avea ch'ultimamente
era la notte con lei dimorato. (VIII.9.6–8; 10.1–6)

(It happened that he saw on his breast a golden brooch, placed there perhaps as a clasp, which he recognized at once as the one he had given to Criseida, when, grieving, he parted from her, taking his leave on that morning when for the last time he had spent the night with her.)

The brooch serves, in effect, as a visual sign of historical truth, of fact, against which all of the rhetoric of love must be measured. Even Pandaro,

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the greatest of the poem's rhetoricians, is silenced by Troiolo's discovery: "e ver sentendol, non sapea che dirsi" (hearing the truth, he did not know what to say) (VIII.22.2).

Readers have long known what Troiolo has only suspected and dreamed. The brooch brings the hero's understanding into accord with the audience's. All irony spent, historically determined knowledge prevails. But what is Boccaccio's source for the fateful brooch? How did he decide upon the brilliantly effective image of the *fermaglio* as a focus for exposing the poem's rhetorical constructs and love's deceptions?

For an answer to this question, we can turn to the discussions of gifts which appear in Andreas Capellanus' *De amore* and Jean de Meun's *Roman de la rose*. As usual, the necessary background for the medieval *artes amandi* is Ovid, though Ovid does not provide the detail of the brooch. In his *Ars amatoria*, the classical poet discusses the kinds of gifts appropriate in courtship, dissuading lovers from offering sumptuous gifts, but suggesting fruit or pigeons or thrushes. He also puts forward the possibility of sending tender verses (AA, II, 201-86). In addition, Ovid warns his students not to give a new lover any gift about which the old lover might learn:

ludite, sed furto celetur culpa modesto;

. . .

nec dederis munus, cognosse quod altera possit.

(AA, II, 389, 391)

(play, but let your sin be hidden with modest secrecy; . . . nor give a gift which the other may learn about.)

When Andreas Capellanus takes up the issue of gifts in his *De amore*, he does so in the form of a *quaestio*. The last question of love posed in his book II is a variation on the one Ovid treats. It has to do with the gifts a lady may properly receive from her lover (II, xxi, 268-69). In her reply, the Countess of Champagne lists a number of small tokens, among which she includes a "fibulam."⁵⁸ Andreas' *fibula* (brooch) reappears, in turn, in Jean de Meun, where it is placed in the context of Ovid's warning about gifts to new lovers:

Et s'il est tex qu'il ne veust mie
leauté porter a s'amie,
si ne la vodroit il pas perdre,
mes a autre se veust aherdre,
s'il veut a s'amie novele
doner queuvrechief ou toële,
chapel, anel, *fermaill*, ceinture,
ou jouel de quelque feture,
gart que l'autre ne les connoisse,

Chaucer and the *roman antique*

car trop avroit au queur angoisse
quant el les li verroit porter,
riens ne l'en porroit conforter.

(9745-56; my emphasis)⁵⁹

(And if he is such that he doesn't wish to keep faith toward his lover, if he doesn't want to lose her, but wants to take up with another, if he wants to give his new friend a kerchief or headcloth, chaplet, ring, *brooch*, belt or jewel of whatever design, take care that the other does not recognize these (things), for she would have great anguish of heart when she saw her [the other woman] wearing them; nothing could give her comfort on account of it.)

The list of gifts in the *Roman de la rose* is so close to the one in Andreas that we must suspect influence. Yet Jean de Meun deftly returns the list to an Ovidian context. If a lover betrays his lady in favor of a new mistress, he must take care in choosing gifts for his new love not to hurt or lose his first *amie*.

Boccaccio's *fermaglio*, used as a *fibbiaglio*, seems to be very closely related to Jean's *fermail* and Andreas' *fibula*. Moreover, the context in which it appears is also Jean's (and Ovid's). Troiolo's brooch, which he had given to Criseida *causa memoriae* has, in turn, been given by Criseida to her new lover, Diomedes. When Troiolo observes this treachery, he criticizes Criseida in Ovidian terms:

Or non avevi tu altro gioiello
da poter dare al tuo novello amante,
io dico a Diomede, se non quello
ch'io t'avea dato con lagrime tante
in rimembranza di me tapinello,
mentre con Calcas fossi dimorante? (VIII. 14. 1-6)

(Now did you not have any other jewel that you could have given to your new lover (I am speaking of Diomedes), if not that [very one] that I had given you with so many tears in remembrance of me, poor wretch, while you were dwelling with Calcas?)

Criseida has clearly violated Ovid's rule about gifts to new lovers. Why did she choose to give Diomedes the very present Troiolo had given her as a sign of their love? Troiolo's criticism is a fair one, though it is also futile. As is characteristic of his fictive art, Boccaccio has brilliantly expanded a medievalized Ovidian paradigm into narrative, using the *fermaglio* as a basis for furthering his circumstantial fiction and, indirectly, his moral argument.

FILOSTRATO, PART I AND II: TROILO'S CAPITULATION TO LOVE AND THE INVENTION OF PANDARO

Turning from the story's end to its beginning, we discover that the paradigms governing Troiolo's capitulation to love in Part I and Pandaro's

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appearance in Part II also draw centrally on the medieval Ovidian tradition. In Part I, Troiolo mocks love as foolish and insane. Then, in the spring, he sees Criseida for the first time in a temple, is struck by Love's dart, turns her image over in his mind, falls in love, consciously abandons reason, and embraces the god of Love. The idea for the lovers' first meeting in the temple of Pallas may stem directly from Ovid's *Ars amatoria*, or it may have come to the poet indirectly by way of Benoît's comparable account of Paris and Helen at the temple of Venus in the *Roman de Troie*. The consequence of the fatal moment of falling in love is a long, lyrical inner debate by Troiolo on the power of love *versus* the claims of reason. Most of Part I deals with the familiar medieval conflict between reason and *Amor*. Before Troiolo first sees Criseida, he laughs at those who are ensnared (*impacciati*) in love, and he wonders whether to call them *amanti* or *smemoranti* (forgetful).

Just before the end of Part I, the Trojan hero acknowledges his submission to love by declaring, "or se' nel laccio preso, il qual biasmavi/ tanto negli altri ed a te non guardavi" (now you are caught in the snare, something you have found blameworthy in others and from which you have not kept yourself) (50.7-8). Then, at the beginning of Part II, after he retires to his room, beaten down by love's anguish, Pandaro suddenly arrives, questions his condition, and promises him comfort. To make such a schematic summary of Part I and the introduction of Pandaro at the beginning of Part II does not in any way falsify Boccaccio's pattern, though the outline is elegantly filled in by Troiolo's lyric discourses on his condition.

Part II, in turn, gives us Pandaro and his *parollette* through which the love affair is propelled forward. Pandaro, who directs Troiolo's thought and action from Part II until he is silenced by fact in Part VIII, is without doubt the poem's most skillful, versatile rhetorician. He is also Boccaccio's most remarkable invention in the *Filostrato*. But who is he? What position does he represent in Boccaccio's design? Upon what sources did Boccaccio draw in the formulation of his voice? Oddly enough, these are questions which have been very little studied since Karl Young's pioneering study in 1908.⁶⁰ Yet they bear importantly on our reading of the *Filostrato* and also on Chaucer's. Moreover, once we understand something of Pandaro's origins and functions in Boccaccio's poem, the *Filostrato*'s outline as a self-critical moral art of love becomes fully apparent.

Ovid as the *praeceptor amoris* in his *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris* had provided several medieval writers with a voice in their translations or reworkings of his rules for love. Most of these writers comfortably assume the mantle of authority bequeathed by their classical forebear and speak, sometimes without acknowledgment, as if they were Ovid himself. Thus,

for example, Andreas Capellanus authorizes his teaching to Walter because he, like Ovid, has himself learned by experience ("manifesto . . . experimento") the perils of Venus.⁶¹ In his *Art d'amour* (mid-thirteenth century), Jakes d'Amiens speaks of *his* art and *his* understanding as the source of his reader's success in love: "Par *mon* art, l'as trouvee et quise,/ E par *mon* sens l'as *tu* conquis" (By my art you have found and pursued her, and by my understanding you have conquered her) (1295-96).⁶² When we listen to Boccaccio's Pandaro in the company of other medieval *praeceptores amoris*, their common bond is readily apparent.⁶³ Pandaro is not Ovid, nor is the *Filostrato* an art of love in the way the *Ars amatoria* is – a systematic, theoretical exposition of behavior useful in the conduct of love affairs. Yet, as we compare Pandaro's voice with these of medieval "translators" of Ovid, and observe his strategies in engineering Troiolo's love affair, striking similarities appear. When Pandaro offers his services to Troiolo, he identifies himself as the artificer of the love affair in language that is very close to that of Jakes d'Amiens:

Tu sei di lei ed ella di te degno,
ed io ci adoprero tutto 'l mio 'ngegno.

. . .

Questa fatica tutta sarà *mia*,
e 'l dolce fine voglio che *tuo* sia.

(II.24.7-8; 32.7-8; my emphasis)

(You are worthy of her and she of you, and I will turn all my powers of invention in this [matter] . . . This effort will be all mine and the sweet end I wish may be yours.)

Indeed, Boccaccio gives a comic twist to Ovid's claims as *magister amoris*: his Pandaro actually woos Criseida in place of Troiolo.

Most, if not all, of Pandaro's instructions in conducting the affair can easily be shown to derive from the *Ars amatoria*, though Boccaccio adds remarkable life to the instructions by dramatizing them. He also underscores, by means of the drama, the highly artificial, rhetorical character of courtly wooing. Pandaro, in his visits to Criseida on Troiolo's behalf, brilliantly exemplifies the kind of ambiguous, persuasive *parolete* required to break down the defenses of an *onesta* (or seemingly *onesta*) lady. Indeed, he solemnly acknowledges just this achievement in terms that recall medieval schoolmasters' lessons on the *Ars amatoria*. "[P]er te," he declares to Troiolo, "ho io corrotto il petto sano/ di mia sorella, e posto l'ho nel core/ il tuo amor" (For you I have corrupted the sane breast of my sister and I have put your love in her heart) (III.6.3-5). Such a claim is astonishing. But it coincides exactly with the power Ovid's *Ars* arrogates to itself and medieval glossators confirm.⁶⁴

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If Boccaccio's first inspiration for the design of Pandaro was Ovid and his medieval translators as *magistri amoris*, however, at least one essential difference separates Pandaro from his principal models. Most of Ovid's imitators assume the Latin poet's voice directly, using his cunning "I" as the authoritative, though ultimately ironic, frame for their expositions. By contrast, Boccaccio locates his Ovidian figure *within* his story just as Dante had placed the pagan Virgil within the account of his own journey to heavenly bliss. In this regard Pandaro assumes a role not altogether unlike Virgil's in Dante's *Commedia*, as a character within the story who guides the young lover towards bliss.⁶⁵ Like the Virgilian instruction in the *Commedia*, the Ovidian lessons, spoken through a character in the midst of the narrative, do not have the final authority. Pandaro's advice, unlike Ovid's in the *Ars amatoria*, must be judged by its consequences in a particular narrative case, by Criseida's betrayal and Troiolo's sad, sober recognition of it in Part VIII.

But Ovid, the medieval *artes amandi*, and Dante's Virgil are not Boccaccio's only models for Pandaro. Eighty years ago, Karl Young mentioned in passing that *Ami* in the *Roman de la rose* might have provided one source for Troiolo's worldly friend, guide, and surrogate.⁶⁶ A closer look at the evidence indicates that Young was precisely right. If Jean de Meun suggested to the Italian poet Diomedes' *fermaglio*, he also gave him substantial hints, I think, for his go-between as a central functionary in the art of love. Much more than the *internuntius* briefly recommended by Ovid, *Ami* in the *Rose* is, as John Fleming has aptly described him, both a *doctor amoris* and a pimp.⁶⁷

If we look at the moment when *Ami* appears to *Amant* in the *Roman de la rose*, we observe its close parallels to Boccaccio. At the very moment when *Amant*, caught, like Troiolo, in the *lax* of love, abandons reason, *Ami* arrives with comfort and advice. Just as *Ami* appears in the *Rose*, as if God-sent, so Pandaro enters Troiolo's bedroom at the very beginning of Part II:⁶⁸

Standosi in cotal guisa un dì soletto
nella camera sua Troiol pensoso,
vi sopravvenne un troian giovinetto
d'alto legnaggio e molto coraggioso. (II. I. I-4)

(Troiolo, pensive, resting in such a way one day alone in his bedroom, a young Trojan of high lineage and very brave of heart, came upon him there.)

Jean de Meun's *Ami* finds *Amant* "pensis e morne" (7200) and says to him, "Qu'est ce . . . biaux douz amis?/ En tel torment qui vos a mis?" (What is it handsome, sweet friend? Who has put you in such torment?) (7207-8).⁶⁹ In

much the same language, Pandaro finds his Troiolo "pensoso" and "lacrimoso" and says to him, "Che è questo, . . . amico caro?/ Hatti già così vinto il tempo amaro?" (What is this . . . dear friend? Has the bitter time already thus conquered you?) (II.1.7-8). The similarities are not, it seems to me, accidental.

The paradigmatic character of the narrative is readily apparent in the allegory of the *Rose*, while Boccaccio transforms the paradigm into a dramatic, historical instance. Yet the line of argument is, in both cases, identical. Reason gives way to Love. A friend, skilled in the art of love, offers comfort and instruction. "Compeinz, ne vous desconfortez" (Friend, don't be disconsolate), Ami says to Amant (7253); "[P]er Dio non ti sconfortare" (For God's sake, I pray you not to be discouraged), Pandaro advises Troiolo (II.21.3). What challenges the reader in analyzing Boccaccio's version of love's progress is the ambiguity inherent in the concrete narrative case he presents. Pandaro as a character, not an allegorical figure, assumes a complexity and density that tend to disguise his schematic function in the fiction. As a master of storytelling even in his early writing, Boccaccio seems to delight in extending the compositional processes endemic to allegorical fiction. Taking an abstract *schema*, he implicates it in a narrative so compelling in its own right that the scheme can be recovered only by intense reflection and discernment on the reader's part. The difficulty for the audience and the delight, then, lie in discovering the moral pattern that animates the story.

But we must return to Boccaccio's design as he develops Pandaro's character in the *Filostrato's* second *parte*. If Pandaro instructs the lamenting Troiolo, alone in his bedroom, in the practical art of love in the first thirty-three stanzas of Part II, he performs a neatly balanced function for Criseida in the second thirty-four (34-67). On a purposeful visit to her, he leads her aside by the hand to a *loggia*. Alone with her, speaking "dolci parole," "lieti motti," and "ragionamenti parentevoli" (sweet words, light jokes, and familiar arguments), he persuades her to consider loving Troiolo. Pandaro's machinations in the first sixty-seven stanzas of Part II enact in a schematic, but also ingeniously dramatic way the central purpose of Ovid's *Ars amatoria* as it is outlined in the medieval *accessus* tradition. As one *accessus* puts it:

Videns ovidius ex amoris ignorancia iuuenes deuiare, quasi eis conpaciens opus istud tractare proposuit in quo Materia ipsius est amor, Intencio instruere iuuenes et puellas.⁷⁰

(Ovid, seeing young men taking the wrong path because of their ignorance about love, almost as if he shared their suffering, proposed to take up this work in which his matter is love, his intention, to instruct boys and girls.)

The *Filostrato* and foolish love

Without Pandaro, Troiolo would continue to pine alone in his bedroom and Criseida would remain in her house, leading a life of quiet propriety. But, with Pandaro's instruction (together with their own amorous inclinations), the two protagonists are swiftly moved into *il regno d'Amor* (III.1).

FILOSTRATO, PARTE III: TROILO AND CRISEIDA IN THE KINGDOM OF LOVE

I have reserved discussion of Boccaccio's acts of invention in the *Filostrato's* lyrical third *parte* until last in my analysis of the narrative composition partly because those who read the poem as an amoral love fantasy tend to regard it as the fiction's hermeneutic center. Above all, it is the segment of the poem which brings the lovers to the fulfillment of their desire, or so it would seem. In it, they enjoy their first night of sexual bliss, and Troiolo sings his glorious hymn of praise to Venus.⁷¹ Of course, Part III does not mark the end of the fiction, nor does it provide real or lasting closure for Troiolo's quest. Boccaccio will skillfully play the lovers' lyrical moment of joy against a temporal background of social propriety, political exigency, and rhetorical treachery in the five remaining narrative *parti*. By collating several genres, including the formal *canzone*, the epistle, and the rhetorical oration, as he orders his story, the poet requires the reader to consider Troiolo's love affair from several different points of view. Troiolo as lover, Pandaro as pimp, Calcas as orator, Diomedes as suitor, Criseida as letter writer, singer of laments, and object of desire – all manipulate a first-person voice, using formal conventions which are progressively shown to be separable from the truth of the situation and the identity of the speakers. All of the literary structures, all of the artifices surrounding and promoting the *Filostrato's* lyrical love affair, point at last not to fulfillment, realization, integrity (modern psychological ideals for love), but rather to a dream of bliss and a betrayal wrought, in part, by language and rhetorical forms.

Calling our attention to the spatial character of the *Filostrato* as *he* perceives it, Boccaccio's narrator-as-lover begins Part III by describing his own architectural experience of the poem as a series of "amorose sale" (amorous rooms) (III.1.3). The third part brings us, in the narrator's words, fully into love's kingdom (III.1-2). Yet even in this *parte*, which is the most lyrical of "places" in the *Filostrato*, the poet implicates the essentially asocial character of the Ovidian love he describes. In the first, framing movement of Part III (5-19) Pandaro instructs Troiolo on the importance of secrecy and the young lover promises to be discreet. Just so the cynical, worldly wise Ovid, near the beginning of his *Ars*, defines the kind of love

he treats as “tuta” (safe) and “furta” (secret).⁷² When Troiolo arrives at last at Criseida’s house on a suitably dark, cloudy night, he lodges himself in a “certo loco remoto ed oscuro” to await his lady. In that “parte segreta,” the two meet and kiss for the first time as a prelude to their night of love. Then, mounting the stairs, they enter Criseida’s *camera* and there they settle into bed to enjoy their “dolce notte, e molto disiata” (sweet and much desired night) (24–33). The circumstantial narrative, with its homely details about the weather and the actual dark, hidden meeting place of the lovers, has the metaphoric effect of reducing the high purity of courtly lyricism (and the entire “regno d’Amor”) to time and a local habitation.

Yet, even as that temporal, “storial” element exerts its pressure, time seems to halt for the space of eleven stanzas in Part III (31–41) as the lovers enjoy the perfect (if brief, transitory) fulfillment of erotic desire. For eighty-eight lines of poetry, physical enactment puts to rest the longings that typically generate lyric *canzoni* and elegies. But all too soon the dawn returns the lovers to time, and the rule of secrecy requires that they part. A lyric song – an *aubade* or *alba* – marks their necessary separation and reentry into the quotidian world which sanctions only legitimate, socially approved loves.

Significantly enough, the two *ottave* that most directly celebrate the lovers’ first moment of sexual bliss – stanzas 33 and 34 – underscore the insubstantiality and inexpressibility of the experience. First the narrator declares that he could not adequately describe the love-making even if he possessed the powers of “poeti tutti quanti” (all the poets) (III.33.4). Then the lovers themselves add to the narrator’s silence their own questions about the experience. One says to the other, “Hotti io in braccio, o sogno, o sei tu desso?” (Oh, do I have you in my arms, or do I dream, or are you yourself?) (III.34.8). These questions are pregnant with doubt, with uncertainty, with problems of expressibility and identity. Nor are the questions answered by more certain closure in the narrative that follows. Finally, as if to emphasize the ephemeral nature of that passionate fulfillment which is the longed-for goal of the typical *canzone*, all of Part III’s lyricism and erotic joy comes abruptly to an end with the narrator’s declaration in its last stanza: “Ma poco tempo durò cotal bene,/ mercé della Fortuna invidiosa” (But such happiness lasted a short time due to envious Fortune) (III.94.1–2). As we have seen, the remaining five narrative *parti* of the *Filostrato* chart the inevitable temporal undoing of the lyric moment.

At the end of Part VIII, after Troiolo has interpreted the *fermaglio* on Diomedes’ cloak, the narrator seeks at last the story’s explicit moral lesson for his readers. No longer concerned with playful questions of love, he raises a question of life. Use this story, he advises *giovinetti*, as a mirror. By

studying Troiolo's love, learn to avoid that "appetito rio" (wicked appetite) which leads to betrayal by young, fickle women who desire many loves. It is as if, finally, the poet, extricating himself from his own fictive, mimetic play, is willing to reveal the point towards which his elaborate formal manipulations have been aimed. The point, for those who read correctly, is a simple, traditional one, not unlike Benoît de Sainte-Maure's or the *Eneas*-poet's. Troiolo has loved foolishly by placing his hope for bliss in a *giovane donna* who is *mobile* and by accepting the guidance of an Ovidian *praeceptor*. As a counterpoise to such errant loving, the narrator advises young men to love wisely, choosing prudent, faithful women as the objects of their desire.

Yet, as the eight-stanza *congedo* (Part ix) in the *Filostrato* makes clear, the abstract moral lesson preached at the end of the eighth *parte* remains only *potentially* usable in relation to each circumstantial, uncompleted narrative instance of young love. The poem's last eight stanzas return us to the elegiac longings of the prologal love-epistle, the formal *canzoni*, and the unfinished story of the lover-narrator. Just as the prologal letter had established a dialogical relationship between the narrator's present and the ancient past of Troiolo's *storia*, so the concluding *canzone* draws the mirroring function of the story into the narrator's (and his readers') future. As he offers his poem to his lady, he challenges her to fit the mold not of Criseida but of the faithful, wise woman he recommends to *giovineti* at the end of Part VIII. If she reads correctly and learns from Troiolo's story, then she will save her lover from the young Trojan's fate.

Moreover, the narrator's concluding song returns us to the poem's initiatory question of love. If the narrator cannot *see* his lady, then perhaps his newly composed work will have that pleasure (ix.5). This last lyric movement of the *Filostrato* mirrors the dominant mood of the poem's ancient hero. But, like Troiolo's songs, it is subject to a critical, moralizing commentary of the kind Boccaccio offers in and through the whole of his narrative composition. It serves to remind us that the formally central questions of love (and of life) posed by the narrator in the prologue, and again by Troiolo's story, remain open to further interpretation and that the reader, like Filomena, must act as the judge in determining the "correct" moral lesson to be drawn from the fiction.

As I have argued in this chapter, Boccaccio's *Filostrato* is no less bookish, no less indebted to a *collectio* of ancient and modern academic sources for its materials and its multiplex form than the twelfth-century *romans antiques*. Like his French forebears in courtly, classicizing vernacular narrative, the Italian poet gives us a text in the root sense of that word – a skillful interweaving of a (modernized) *antica storia*, Ovidian mimesis, and

medieval, academic moral paradigms. Like the *romans antiques*, his text as a collection of diverse materials and literary forms offers a multiplicity of perspectives from which to view and judge the central story. Yet, in the *Filostrato* this multiplicity is not as clearly or hieratically ordered as it had been in the French fictions, partly because the narrator does not present himself as a teacher or philosopher on the pattern of his predecessors. Instead, he describes himself as a *student* of love, a *quistionante* seeking rather than stating the moral solutions to the questions he poses. In this role, he provides a dominant model for his readers which is more deeply challenging and morally open than the readerly models offered by the authors of the French *romans antiques*.

Boccaccio uses his central questioning persona to establish a dynamic interplay between the moral problems raised by the narrative and his poetic composition as a carefully calculated, self-contained *opera*. Within his poem's well-marked *parti*, *stanze*, and rubricated subdivisions, he invites his readers to explore ("with a good heart") the relative truth-telling capacities of several well-known literary forms and moral paradigms in relation to the central *storia*.⁷³ What gives his early experiment in *romanz* its particular brilliance is not only its rigorously formal composition but also the unresolved tension at its center. Between the questions of love he raises and the moral solutions towards which the fiction as a *liber* ought to direct its readers Boccaccio interposes his dense, lyrically compelling "ancient" fiction of Troiolo as well as his contemporary narrator's analogous but unfinished *storia*.

Boccaccio's *Teseida* and the triumph of Aristotelian virtue

In a deluxe bible, now known as the Bible of Malines, commissioned by King Robert of Anjou about 1340, there are two full-page illustrations that bear interestingly on Boccaccio's writing of the *Teseida* (c. 1339–41).¹ The two illustrations, made by the miniaturist, Cristoforo Orimina, occupy a position of preeminence in the Bible, appearing before the beginning of the text and forming a sort of diptych. On the left-hand page, King Robert is portrayed, sitting on a throne, surrounded by personifications of eight virtues, whose identities – Justice, Fortitude, Prudence, Temperance, Generosity, Purity, Discretion, and Fidelity – are indicated by Latin inscriptions on their octagonal haloes (f. 3v). Beneath the feet of the virtues are depicted seven vices in the devil's company, and all of them are turned upside down. An inscription above the throne identifies the king: "Rex Robertus, rex expertus in omni scientia."

The image of Robert surrounded by personified virtues epitomizes the king's manifest and abiding interest in the ideal moral conduct of rulers, while the inscription above the throne testifies to his fame as a patron of the liberal arts.² Much earlier in his reign, in 1310, Robert had commissioned an illuminated copy of Aegidius Romanus' neo-Aristotelian treatise on princely virtue, the *De regimine principum*.³ And, during the late 1320s or early 1330s, he had arranged, perhaps with Giotto, to have a state room in his Castelnuovo decorated with frescoes of nine famous pagan and scriptural figures, no doubt as moral examples both positive and negative, for himself and his court.⁴ It is clear that Cristoforo, in his portrait of Robert for the Malines Bible, eulogizes the king in just the terms that would have most delighted a ruler unusually conscious of himself as both a patron of classical learning and a moral example.

Cristoforo's second full-page illustration for the Malines Bible – facing the figure of Robert and the virtues – serves a different purpose and makes a different point (f. 4r). It is a genealogical tableau illustrating the Angevin dynasty. In the top register, Charles I of Anjou, founder of the Angevin

monarchy in the kingdom of Naples, is shown with his first wife, Beatrice of Provence, seated on a throne and surrounded by barons. At Charles's feet, kneeling, is his son, the future Charles II. On his son's forehead the king places the royal crown. Charles II appears once more in the central register, seated on a throne, in the company of his wife, Marie of Hungary. Beside her stand her royal daughters. Next to King Charles there is a second group, which includes Charles Martel, the king's oldest son (d. 1296), and a haloed bishop, Louis of Toulouse, second son of Charles II, who became a Franciscan in 1296. King Charles, Marie of Hungary, Charles Martel, and Saint Louis of Toulouse all direct their gaze towards King Charles' youngest son, who is Robert of Anjou. At his feet, two young princesses kneel. These are the two granddaughters of Robert – Jeanne and her sister, Marie. Finally, in the bottom register, Robert, “expertus in omni scientia,” sits enthroned, with his wife Sancia of Aragon. At the left, Robert's daughter-in-law, Marie de Valois, widow of Charles of Calabria, presents her two daughters, Jeanne and Marie, to her mother-in-law. The elegant, hieratic images in this genealogical history are clearly designed to depict a serene royal dynasty, confident of its identity, looking forward, through the children represented in the second and third registers, to a stable future.

In fact, however, the genealogical tableau records the fragile conclusion of an extremely difficult period in the history of the Angevin monarchy – a period that coincides precisely with the young Boccaccio's stay in Naples. In 1328, probably a year or so after Boccaccio's arrival in Naples, King Robert's only son and heir, Duke Charles of Calabria, had died. Five years later, after Robert had given up all hope of a male heir through his own marriage, he completed arrangements, with a papal dispensation, for the betrothal of his granddaughter, Jeanne, to his great nephew, Andrea of Hungary.⁵ At the time, the two children were seven and six years old respectively. By this act, Robert aimed to insure the continuation of his dynasty – if only through a woman – and to confirm little Jeanne as his heir apparent.

To solemnize the official contract of marriage, the King of Hungary arrived in Naples in September 1333, with 3,000 knights. After an initial stay of several days outside the city, during which he was very well entertained, he entered in procession through the Porta di Capuana “con gran gente” and was received with “grandi onore.”⁶ The *Cronaca di Partenope*, written in the middle of the fourteenth century, describes the festivities surrounding the marriage contract in the following way:

After they had entered into the city of Naples, the contract of marriage was made between the said Andrea and the aforesaid Jeanne, who was supposed to succeed in

the kingdom to the said King Robert, because he did not have any other heir. And, for the space of eight days, great feasts and dances with various general banquets were made and jousts were proclaimed, which, having been solemnized, lasted for the space of a month and more, and all the nobility of the city of Naples as well as the populace and the artists of Naples made their acquaintance, who, on horseback and on foot, as was worthy of such great festivities, on Sundays and feastdays went through the city with much music and other instruments.⁷

As the author of the *Cronaca* emphasizes, the “triunfe e feste” were enjoyed “tanto tra gentile omini quanto da tutto il populo di Napoli e da tutte le piazze” (138).

Boccaccio, still a very young man, would surely have been among those who participated in the celebration and he would have witnessed too the month-long jousts proclaimed for the occasion. As a youthful friend of the court, he would also have been keenly aware of the political motives surrounding the betrothal. Above all, he would have been privy to the difficulties raised by the fact that the only direct heir available to the king was a young girl. The marriage contract offered Robert a workable compromise. The young prince Andrea, grandson of his brother, Charles Martel, would become Jeanne's consort, thereby (theoretically) assuring her a proper womanly role in a patriarchal society.

The pageantry surrounding the marriage contract, like the genealogy recorded in the Malines Bible, idealized the actual less-than-ideal situation even as it celebrated the king's power, wealth, and virtue. It not only announced to the monarch's subjects his political strength and the continuity of his dynasty through legitimate marriages and noble children; it also epitomized his royal magnificence. When, in the late 1330s, Boccaccio undertook his ambitious *Teseida* (or *Le nozze di Emilia*), he seems to have had in mind ceremonial themes and motives for his poetic composition not far from Cristoforo Orimina's in his illustrations for the Malines Bible. Although Boccaccio probably completed his *Teseida* after he had left Naples, the influence of his Neapolitan stay dominates the poem.⁸ Indeed, it seems to me likely that he undertook the *Teseida* specifically to please and honor King Robert. As I argue in this chapter, the poem celebrates, through the character of Teseo, the role of the prince as a moral example in terms that parallel Cristoforo Orimina's contemporary, though much less intricate, image of King Robert in his Bible portrait. In addition, Boccaccio's poem takes as its basis for narrative development the question of legitimate political marriage in relation to the practice of princely virtue. This is a theme centrally implicated not only in Cristoforo's illuminations for the Malines Bible, but also, as we have seen, in the French tradition of the *roman antique*.

From a literary point of view, Boccaccio's poem participates in the sophisticated, trilingual milieu of the Angevin court of the later 1330s, with its several aristocratic constituencies.⁹ The *Teseida*'s explicit relationship to Statius' Latin *Thebaid* acknowledges a scholarly interest in the canonical books of the liberal-arts curriculum much cultivated by Robert at his court. At the same time, with its concern for political marriages in relation to Ovidian *fine amor*, Boccaccio's poem actively incorporates the French literary interests of the Angevin court, and particularly those of the court's royal women.¹⁰ We cannot know whether Boccaccio had copies of the mid-twelfth-century French *romans antiques* in their original form before him as he designed his *Teseida*. He could easily have relied instead on one or another French or Italian prose version, and these would have given him a good idea of the twelfth-century French *romanciers*' principal subjects and formal interests.¹¹ We do know that there were copies of the prose *Roman de Thèbes* in Naples before 1320.¹² We know too, as I have already indicated, that an illuminated copy of one version of the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César* was produced, probably at King Robert's request, about the year 1340.¹³

This redaction of the *Histoire* includes an account of the fall of Thebes, a version of the fall of Troy heavily indebted to Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie*, and the story of Eneas.¹⁴ It also incorporates information about the Amazons, based on Orosius. The *Histoire* would have provided Boccaccio with the story of Theseus as it had first been told in the vernacular by the author of the *Roman de Thèbes*. It would also have given him a basis for the account of the Amazons with which his poem begins. The Neapolitan manuscript of the *Histoire* is copiously illustrated, and a number of the miniatures suggest the artist's interest in identifying the Angevin court with the great heroes of ancient history. On f. 21v, for example, Teseo, dressed for battle, bears the arms of the house of Anjou. Boccaccio might have encountered the tradition of the French *romans antiques* by direct contact with the original poems or by a route other than that of the prose version of the *Histoire ancienne* contained in BL MS Royal D.1. But it is tempting to think that the copy of the *Histoire*, made for the court at Naples while Boccaccio was writing his *Teseida*, provided him with at least some of the material and formal ideas – originally developed by the French authors of the *romans antiques* – that shape his poem.

Whatever the case, however, neither the *Thebaid* nor any known vernacular version of the Thebes story includes the love-interest Boccaccio develops through the erotic triangle involving Palemone, Arcita, and Emilia. Indeed, most medieval accounts of the Theban civil war begin with the story of Oedipus and his incestuous marriage with Jocasta, matter that would, on the face of it, have offered writers little encouragement for

romantic development. Yet the Italian poet, probably following the model of Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie* and his own *Filostrato*, ingeniously grafts a story of youthful *fine amor* onto the ancient stock of Statius' *Thebaid*.¹⁵ The *Teseida*, moreover, is written neither in Latin (the language of classical learning), nor in French or Provençal, the dominant vernacular tongues of Robert's court and of the French literary tradition. Boccaccio, following the lead of Dante, prefers his native language, and his poem argues, through the elegance of its often-aulic diction and form, as well as its concluding allusion to Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*, for the capacities of his own vernacular as a vehicle appropriate to serious courtly poetry.

THE *TESEIDA*, THE *THEBAID*, AND THE TRADITION OF THE
ROMAN ANTIQUE

If Petrarch looked back to Statius, the last of Rome's poet-laureates, as the model for the position he himself sought in 1341, Boccaccio almost simultaneously celebrates the Latin *Thebaid* as the exemplar for his *roman* of Teseo. He divides his poem into twelve books of *ottava rima*; he marks off sections or parts of each chapter with headings and rubricated capitals; and he provides an extensive gloss, which explains, among other things, what the *auctor* intends under the fictions of poetry.¹⁶ Boccaccio's own copy of the *Thebaid* contained, we know, marginal glosses based on the commentary by Lactantius; and he carefully wrote out comparable notes in the wide margins of his Italian "translation."¹⁷ His book of Teseo is designed to look like the Latin *liber* to which it refers in a literal, physical way. Yet the Italian poem, like other medieval classicizing fictions *en romanç*, is not a simple translation of its ancient source, but, as David Anderson has recently argued, an imitation by analogy.¹⁸

To be sure, Statius provided details which serve as a basis for Books 1 and 11 and for later public episodes in the poem.¹⁹ But in terms of its formal affiliations, the *Teseida* participates at least equally in the tradition of the *roman antique*. Speaking through several voices and offering several different perspectives on his narrative, the poet dramatizes the interplay between matters of public (epic) princely concern and the private, affective, subjective realm of *amor*, both illicit and legitimate. In making his vernacular fiction, Boccaccio transforms Statius' classical epic, reducing the fraternal strife between Polynices and Eteocles to a smaller scale, and changing its terms by examining the conflicts engendered by Ovidian love.²⁰ Moreover, in his Teseo, he offers an exemplary narrative study of virtuous princely conduct. Like Benoît de Sainte-Maure and the other

authors of the *romans antiques*, though in a more ambitious, calculated, indirect way, Boccaccio develops his academic, moral argument through an elaborate network of juxtaposed voices, relegating the voice of the learned glossator to the margins.²¹ In his *Teseida* he speaks by turns as a young lover subject to his passion, a *poeta* in command of the classical art of literary *finzione*, and a philosophical explicator of causality, mythology, and psychology. And he plays his voices against each other just as he plays the virtues and the *onesto parlare* of Teseo against the foolish passions and *amoroso parlare* of Palemone and Arcita.

Furthermore, like the *Eneas*-poet and Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Boccaccio takes as a principal theme the contrast between legitimate marriages for princes and various forms of illicit Ovidian love. Teseo's marriage at the end of Book I and the chastened Palemone's marriage at the end of Book XII are set in exemplary formal and thematic opposition to the young knight's fateful, foolish passion for Emilia. In addition, the many destructive loves of mythological figures detailed in the marginal glosses extend the poet's argument. Not only young, foolish passion, but also incest and adultery, enter into the poet's large, encyclopedic scheme concerning the nature and tragic dangers of erotic love. Like the Ovid of the medieval commentary tradition, the authors of the French *romans antiques*, and the redactors of the *Histoire ancienne*, Boccaccio implicates a study of "all kinds of [secular erotic] love" in his poetic composition.

What distinguishes Boccaccio's *Teseida*, like his *Filostrato*, from the earlier French *romans antiques* and their prose counterparts, however, is the poet's insistence on his *opera* as an independent aesthetic and compositional space designed for fictive play. Boccaccio's genius in both of his early poems lies in his elegant, witty invention of "ancient" narrative materials to mask but also reveal normative moral paradigms. The play between the stories and the paradigms constitutes the poet's (and the reader's) field of inquiry. Because Boccaccio's dominant narrative voice as a self-styled lover tends to be intimately tied to the story rather than the paradigms, the reader's sympathy is drawn in the direction of plot. Yet it is the paradigms that finally determine the shape and poetic intention of the *Teseida* as an independent, self-sufficient *libretto*.

AUTHORIAL VOICES IN THE PROLOGAL EPISTLE TO THE *TESEIDA*

The introductory prose epistle prefacing the *Teseida*, like the *Filostrato*'s prologue, is a thoroughly artificial construct.²² On the surface, it is a persuasive appeal to Fiammetta – a love letter begging for a distant lady's

favor. Yet, in fact, the epistle's subject is less a dialogue between the narrator and his lady than a debate between two voices and two forces within himself. Moreover, the narrator's internal debate obliquely introduces the poem's largest issues.

The first speaker, the first voice in the introductory epistle, is the "I" who identifies himself as a lover, separated from his lady and apparently spurned by her. In his misery he can still summon her image and thereby console himself. As a lover, he tells us, he is subject to the vision of Fiammetta and to love. Indeed, he says, the "piacevole imagine" (delightful image) of his lady has successfully overcome his own "proponimento." The word *proponimento* has here the force of logical and rhetorical as well as moral firmness of purpose. Whatever the speaker had determined to put forward or argue as well as to be and do has been overruled by the power of love and his own consolatory imagination. "Oh, quanto allora," he declares, "me a me togliendo di mente, parendomi essere ne' primi tempi . . . sento consolazione!"²³ By accepting and cultivating his passionate servitude, Boccaccio's prologal speaker is enraptured. In his choice of love, he implicitly inverts the well-known Boethian quest for rational consolation, philosophy, and spiritual liberation. Rejecting reason and embracing imagination, he clings to the memory of his lady. By this choice, which occupies most of the epistle, the speaker as "author" defines himself as one who has, in well-known Boethian, academic terms, given over the "fruitful harvest of reason" in favor of "the sterile thorns of the passions" which "do not liberate the minds of men from disease, but merely accustom them to it."²⁴

At the same time, however, another rational, objective voice counters the voice of the lover in the prologal epistle, calling attention to values and interests other than fantasy and sexual passion. According to the letter's speaker in his second voice, certain elements in his story will transcend the simple purpose of delighting his lady. These include adherence to the "cagioni" of the story and a learned ability to interweave "storia," "favola," and "chiuso parlare"; – that is, history, fable, and figurative language. Boccaccio's interest in fables and figurative language probably owes a debt to Horace's *Ars poetica*, and even more to schoolmasterly descriptions of certain classical *auctores* as poets. Thus, for example, an early thirteenth-century commentary on Ovid's *Heroides* explains that Ovid intended to delight his readers "per fabulas et pulchras uerborum compositiones."²⁵ In addition, the poet in his rational voice observes that his storytelling will include narrative material which, more than merely describing a love triangle, will explain the causes of things. Here we find ourselves suddenly in the presence of a clerkly *autore* who will examine how

and why events occur as they do. The words the author chooses to describe his poetic enterprise indicate a high intellectual responsibility to the narrative materials quite separate from their sentimental interest. He will "demonstrate" how events have come to happen; he will establish two *premissioni* for his tale; he will set forth the *cagione* of Teseo's war in Thebes. The terms Boccaccio chooses to characterize his poetic composition belong to an academically based art of storytelling of the kind attributed to Ovid and other Latin *auctores* and claimed by Benoît de Sainte-Maure in his *Roman de Troie*. The poet uses them to call attention to his higher philosophical and "poetic" aims in writing. His composition *may* please his lady, but rather *per intelletto* than through sentiment alone.

Having subtly interpolated a clerkly intention within the context of his love letter, Boccaccio appeals at last not to Fiammetta's heart but to her "sana mente" as he asks her to study his story and grant him her favor.²⁶ The tension between sentiment and intellect – concupiscible appetite and reason – expressed by indirection and implication in the prologal epistle foreshadows the structure of the whole poem. The dialectic in the *Teseida* proper is a challenging one in which Boccaccio, who reveals himself incrementally as a philosophical *autore* and a poet, speaks in his several voices on both sides of the question.²⁷ The side of passionate desire is exposed in the attitudes towards love maintained for most of the poem by Palemone and Arcita; in the Ovidian stories about tragic lovers, often alluded to in the poem and detailed in the marginal *chiose*; and in the "più pio sermone" and topoi devoted to the subject of erotic love as it is developed in Books III–XI. By contrast, intellect, reason, and social responsibility find their support in the moral and political themes of Books I and II (the *premissioni* for the whole work), in the pervasive example of "Teseo magnifico"; in the public, ceremonial concerns of Books XI and XII; and in those marginal *chiose* which delve behind the poetic fictions to uncover the psychological or historical motives generating events. Furthermore, even the narrator within the poem, who admits his subjective involvement in *amore*, takes his own surprisingly negative position towards love from the beginning: "ntendo i vostri effetti dire/ *con poco bene e pien d'assai martire*" (I intend to tell your [i.e. Venus'] consequences, of little value and filled with suffering) (I.3.7–8; my emphasis).

The debate between the *amoroso parlare* of love poetry and the *onesto parlare* of public moral poetry is resolved, finally, in the terms Palemone chooses in Book XII as he agrees to wed Emilia:

... se me'è tolta
felicità, *che in me almen ragione*

The *Teseida* and Aristotelian virtue

*più che 'l voler non possa alcuna volta;
e ben che in me tra lor sia gran quistione,
che 'l dover vinca ho isperanza molta.*

(xii.23.1-5; my emphasis)

(If happiness has been wrested from me, at least reason, more than desire, should be in me. And although there is a strong debate between them in me, I have great hope that duty will conquer.)

Palemone speaks here from a position beyond the death of his friend, Arcita. This death has clarified for him the difference between duty and delight, reason and desire, and he prefers the former, although for most of the poem he had been choosing the latter. Paradoxically, in this case, his duty is also his delight. Emilia, likewise sobered by Arcita's death, enters into the marriage as into a holy, socially sanctioned state. She is no longer "gnara" (ignorant), we are told (xii.69.5), and her behavior has become chaste and respectful.

THE OUTER FRAME: BOOKS I AND II, XI AND XII, THE PHILOSOPHICAL POET AND THE GOOD PRINCE

When we seek the large compositional plan for the *Teseida* with the French tradition of the *roman antique* in mind, we discover that the first two books and the last two provide standards of poetic authority, princely conduct, and legitimate love against which to judge the poem's interior love story. The poet begins with an outer narrative – which corresponds to Benoît's outer academic perspective and the *Eneas*-poet's exemplary use of Paris' Judgment to frame his account of Dido, Eneas, and Lavine. With Book III, Boccaccio moves to the love story. But the ethical moorings of the opening books establish social, rational norms by which to judge the *insani atti* of the two young lovers. What must interest us in the opening and closing books are the *specific* ways in which the poet establishes his definition of the philosophical *autore*, the noble prince, and legitimate marriage.²⁸ In the last two books, Boccaccio returns to the themes introduced in the first two, not simply repeating his lessons, but enriching them. At the end of the poem, the author shows the virtuous conduct of the prince as well as the eloquent compositional power of the artist in the moving contexts of Arcita's funeral and Palemone's marriage.

The philosophical poet

Boccaccio, in his role as *poeta*, introduces Book I, and the poem as a whole, with an invocation to the Muses, who, he declares, stand "in the shade of

the laurel tree." Lest readers mistake the significance of the classical allusions, marginal glosses explain that the *autore* is following the "antico costume de' componitori" in his invocation. The Muses, as the glossator (who is also Boccaccio in one of his voices) points out, are "cagione degli onori de' poeti" (the cause of poets' honors). Moreover, the leaves of the laurel tree, sacred to Apollo, are the prize given to "poeti" and "imperadori." Both poets and political rulers are rewarded for their labors with a crown of laurels.²⁹ The poet's opening invocation is aureate and affected, and it certainly reveals his effort to imitate the art of the classical *auctores*. But it also plays an important part in his underlying moral argument. In Boccaccio's poem, the Muses and Apollo not only begin the story; they re-enter the narrative as the poem nears its close. They reappear first in Book XI, in the decoration on the shield given to Teseo by Egeo to mark the prince's excellence at Arcita's funeral games. They are also the *sante donne* of Book XII, whom the narrator invokes to describe Emilia on her wedding day. The Muses, he says, are the "holy ladies who were present when Amphion caused the walls of Thebes to be built by playing his lyre" (XII.52). As the glossator in the margin explains, the sweetness of the lyre signifies the "power of [Amphion's] eloquence . . . Through the medium of the Muses, . . . by speaking very gracefully, he induced the men of the region to build the walls of Thebes."³⁰

Many years after he had completed the *Teseida*, in his monumental *Genealogie deorum gentilium*, Boccaccio defended the Muses of poetry against those who called them theatrical strumpets.³¹ The nine daughters of Jove, he argues, are responsible for ordering the rhythms of discourse, setting knowledge in order, and enhancing the majesty of scriptural texts (XI.51–52). In the *Teseida*, a similar defense of the Muses and of poetry seems to animate his presentation of himself as an *autore* and his celebration of practical moral wisdom. Appearing as they do at key points in the poem, the Muses stand for a high, civilizing reason and compositional power which can give order to human affairs. They are forces for social and intellectual as well as poetic order and harmony.

From the start of Book I, the glossator describes and interprets the poet's high enterprise, lest the unwary (or insufficiently educated) reader should fail to recognize it. He frames the text of the poem with marginal explanations as to exactly what the *autore* intends in his storytelling. The author is concerned, we are told explicitly, with an art that fictionalizes but also reveals the causes of things. Over and over, the glosses emphasize the ancient writers' interest in poetic feigning and Boccaccio's imitation of them. Variations of "poeticamente fingendo" (poetically feigning) and an alternative phrase, "secundo che i poeti scrivon" (as the poets write) to

describes the ancient poets' mythologies (and Boccaccio's) appear no less than nine times in the glosses for Book I.³² Always, as the pedantic glossator indicates, such poetic mythologizing (which may include the "errori degli antichi" [I.55.271]) must be interpreted allegorically if readers are to move from the veil of fiction to philosophic understanding. So, for example, when the ancient poets (and Boccaccio) locate Mars' house in Thrace, they intend a moral allegory. According to the philosophers, the anger required for military valor flourishes best in sanguine men and such men tend to live in a cold climate like that of Thrace.³³

Besides his interest in feigning and allegorizing, Boccaccio also concerns himself with explaining the causes of things. Someone might ask, the marginal note declares, why the poet has included the story of Teseo's war with the Amazons and so forth in the first book. The answer is simple. He wanted to "mostrare" and "dichiarare" (explain) whence and how Emilia came to Athens, how Arcita and Palemone fell into Teseo's hands, and why Teseo made war on the Amazons, in order to make "molto più chiar[o]" what is to follow. Here Boccaccio as glossator in the margin of his own poem confirms an authorial intention – that of intellectual or philosophical understanding – which had already been anticipated in his poem's prologal letter. This is an intention that aligns Boccaccio directly with the French authors of the *romans antiques* (and also with their classical forebears as medieval schoolmasters had described them), who are likewise cloaked with the authority of the philosophers educated in the liberal arts.³⁴ What distinguishes Boccaccio's poem from the work of his French predecessors, however, is his painstaking effort to create a poetic *finzione* in deliberate imitation of certain of the great Latin *auctores*.

As a learned *autore*, Boccaccio adds to his first invocation in the *Teseida* the information that he is translating an "antica storia" so neglected that it has not been told by any Latin writer. As the gloss explains, the story has never been translated from the Greek.³⁵ The insistence that his work is a translation of an ancient original, like his invocation to the Muses, underscores his intended participation in the medieval tradition of vernacular poetry based on ancient history which began with the twelfth-century French *romans antiques*.

We must not, however, overlook the voice of Boccaccio the lover in the opening stanzas of the *Teseida* (1.3–5). As if he were identifying a hierarchy of motives or intentions for his composition, the poet offers a second invocation, one that includes Mars, Venus, and Fiammetta. He prays for the deities' help in showing the "effetti" of love and war. He then addresses his lady, who is to be his intended reader. She must be the one to judge the story of "casi avversi" (adverse accidents/happenings) (1.4.7) and give the

poet approval. As Janet Levarie Smarr has argued, the relationship between Boccaccio the lover and Fiammetta as his ideal reader in the *Teseida* is not a simple one. These stanzas of invocation, stressing the pain of love and calling attention to Arcita's loss of his *persona* because of his passion, indirectly anticipate the poem's long meditation on the self-erasing martyrdom involved in young foolish love generally.

The good prince

While the glossator's voice carries forward most of the direct explication concerning the poet's role in the *Teseida* (as opposed to the lover-narrator's), the narrative itself incrementally builds a portrait of Teseo's character and achievements. Boccaccio's *mythos* of Teseo is as fascinating and compelling in its concrete presentation as it is scholastic in its conception. "Teseo molto magnifico," like Boccaccio the philosophical *autore*, knows how to manage and definitively transcend the vicissitudes of life. If the poet displays his eloquence and wisdom by means of artful composition, the prince's moral ordering power emerges in his exemplary conduct and brilliant oratory over the course of the whole poem. When women, tyrants, young foolish lovers, and accidental death seriously threaten the good order of the commonweal or the order of nature or personal happiness, so the events of the poem teach us, the prince exerts moral, intellectual, rhetorical, and sometimes physical force to redress the wrong. While Book 1 recounts Teseo's prudent, ingenious military defeat of the misguided, mannish Amazons and his marriage to Ipolita, the second book studies the noble prince's magnanimity as it shines in contrast to the ignoble behavior of the tyrant Creon. In these opening demonstrations of princely behavior, Teseo shows his martial skills in battles outside his own territory. With a becoming ingenuity and prudence, he restores the Amazons to their proper role as women who marry and are subordinate to men. He also demonstrates, in his war with Creon, the difference between the righteous anger of the just king and the self-interested, destructive anger of the tyrant.

A precise theoretical basis for Boccaccio's portrait of Teseo in the *Teseida* can be found, in abstract form, in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and its later medieval exponents.³⁶ Scholars have recognized for some time Boccaccio's interest in Aristotle's *Ethics*, a text rediscovered in its full form by the Latin West during the middle years of the thirteenth century.³⁷ Dante had developed a working knowledge of the newly recovered teaching, and it is not surprising that Boccaccio, an avid student of the classics during his stay

in Naples, should also have found the Stagirite's moral program compelling. Indeed, as early as 1339 or 1340, he may have copied the whole of the *Ethics*, together with Saint Thomas Aquinas' commentary on it, into a manuscript for his own use.³⁸

But it was not the *Ethics* alone that probably influenced Boccaccio in designing his *Teseida*. The rediscovery of the entire Aristotelian text had led some political theorists, particularly in Italy, to incorporate the *Nicomachean Ethics* into treatises on the rule of princes. Before the mid-thirteenth century such treatises had relied largely on Cicero, Seneca, and the Christian Stoic tradition. In the later thirteenth century and the first decades of the fourteenth, however, several important tracts appeared which were influenced in whole or in part by Aristotle's *Ethics*. We cannot know for certain whether Boccaccio copied the *Ethics* and Thomas's commentary before he left Naples. But we can be sure that he had easy access at King Robert's court to at least two of the political guidebooks informed by the rediscovery of Aristotle. Both of them were written by Italian moralists, and one of them provides a full compendium of the *Ethics*.

The first of the treatises to which I refer – the second in point of composition – was written by Fra Paolino the Minorite (d. 1344), who served as an advisor to Robert of Naples.³⁹ In his treatise, composed in the Venetian dialect, Paolino begins with the “old-fashioned” system of the three theological virtues and the four cardinal virtues.⁴⁰ Like his twelfth-century predecessors, he quotes Seneca and Augustine as authorities, though he also reveals his interest in Aristotle by including Aristotelian teaching on the irascible and concupiscible appetites.⁴¹ Moreover, after he has described the cardinal virtues, he adds eight other virtues which “mete Aristotele” (Aristotle puts forth) to deal with temporal goods and worldly interchange: mansuetude, magnanimity, magnificence, liberality, proper love of honor, veracity, courtesy, and affability.⁴²

These same Aristotelian virtues, more fully defined, also animate one of the best known of the later-medieval treatises on princely rule – Aegidius Romanus' *De regimine principum*, written for Philip the Fair of France before he ascended the throne.⁴³ Aegidius (c. 1243–1316), an Augustinian friar, received his baccalaureate from the University of Paris, where, according to his biographers, he had the good fortune to hear Saint Thomas Aquinas' lectures.⁴⁴ And these lectures may well have included Thomas's commentary on the full text of Aristotle's *Ethics*. In any case, in the first book of his *De regimine*, Aegidius, the “doctor fundatissimus,” as he was called in Paris, condensed the *Ethics*, perhaps influenced by Saint Thomas's similar effort in the second part of his *Summa theologica*.⁴⁵ Aegidius includes twelve virtues in his list of habits appropriate for princes:

The Philosopher towards the end of [Book] v of the *Ethics* lists, besides Prudence and Justice, ten moral virtues, namely, Fortitude, Temperance, Love of Honor, Magnanimity, Largesse, Magnificence, Mansuetude, Veracity, Affability and Eutrapelia . . . Therefore, counting Justice and Prudence, there are twelve moral virtues.⁴⁶

Four of these virtues – Fortitude, Mansuetude, Magnanimity, and Magnificence – Aegidius locates in the irascible appetite. Six other virtues – Temperance, Liberality, Love of Honor, Veracity, Affability, and Eutrapelia – are placed in the concupiscible appetite. In addition, according to Aegidius, Prudence resides in the intellect, and Justice in the will.⁴⁷ The Italian moralist's scheme is fully based on Aristotle and Saint Thomas, but he also exhibits considerable independence in his adaptation of the Stagirite's ethical scheme to the responsibilities of a medieval ruler.⁴⁸

As I indicated at the beginning of this chapter, King Robert of Naples's library included an illuminated copy of Aegidius' *De regimine*.⁴⁹ Not only does this piece of information suggest Robert's keen interest in his own political education; it also assures us that the text was readily available to Boccaccio, who frequented Robert's library during his long sojourn in Naples.⁵⁰ Robert Hollander, Janet Levarie Smarr, and Victoria Kirkham have all pointed in various ways to Boccaccio's use of Aristotle's *Ethics* in his *Teseida*. Smarr, in particular, following the pioneering work of Hollander, argues that, through his three male protagonists, the Italian poet offers an allegorical study of the soul's irascible and concupiscible appetites.⁵¹ In the pages that follow, I suggest instead that the poem is designed as an elaborately detailed *symbolic* narrative examining through story each of the Aristotelian virtues to be practiced by the ideal prince as well as the vices to be avoided. What the poetic fiction offers that a treatise or an allegory strictly speaking could not is a study of princely virtues defined in and through the complexities of "historical" human situations. The virtues Boccaccio studies *require* enactment within specific, difficult, contexts in order to reveal their full character. By means of his poem, the Italian poet seems to have been offering King Robert (or perhaps some other important prince) a new, richly practical awareness of political virtues whose contours he might already have gleaned in an abstract way from guidebooks like Aegidius' *De regimine*.⁵²

Teseo's virtues in Books I and II

Boccaccio's Teseo not only enacts in a systematic way the political virtues studied by Aristotle and his medieval disciples. He also illustrates their

cumulative (Aristotelian) reward in the achievement of princely felicity and even a kind of earthly beatitude. As Aegidius puts it:

It must be diligently noted that just as matter, through its requisite transmutations, achieves its perfection and form, so man, through just and requisite efforts, achieves his perfection and happiness . . . through works we may deserve to win the goal, or happiness.⁵³

In his *roman antique*, Boccaccio, like the *Eneas*-poet, develops a dramatized narrative model of noble conduct as a usable example for rulers. But the Teseo who emerges under Boccaccio's pen in Books I and II of the *Teseida* is more intricately and richly developed than the portrait of the ideal prince in the twelfth-century *Eneas*. As we uncover the compositional plan for Books I and II of the *Teseida*, we find that the Duke of Athens as "signor possente" (I.13.3), "Teseo magnanimo" (I.16.1), "magnifico barone" (I.49.1) "il buon Teseo" (II.53.1; 56.1) systematically enacts for us certain specific virtues appropriate to the noble ruler. By contrast, Teseo's first enemies, the Amazons, are "crude e dispietate" (I.6.2); unwilling to be "soggiogate" (I.6.6); full of "crudeltà" and "opere noiose" (I.16.4-5). In a strictly parallel way, Creon, who is the exemplary enemy in Book II, is characterized as "perfido" (II.31.1). Like the Amazons, he is also given to "crudeltà" (II.35.8). He is "fiero Creonte" (II.47.1) and "fier tiranno" (II.61.2), and he has a "fiero cuor," full of hatred for the Greeks (II.13.1). If Teseo is "magnifico," Creon does "tal malefizio" (II.14.6) that he arouses the righteous ire of the Greek prince. In theoretical terms, both the Amazons and Creon provide the good Teseo with just reasons to enter into war and thereby to display his martial courage.

In Boccaccio's conceptual scheme, the Amazons offer Teseo a special case of injustice, because they are women who have upset not only the political order by their cruelty but also the natural order. As Aegidius observes in the first book of his rule for princes, "foemina viro naturaliter debet esse subiecta, eo quod naturaliter deficiat a viri prudentia" (a woman ought naturally to be subject to a man because she is naturally inferior to the man in prudence) (I.2.65).⁵⁴ Boccaccio's first descriptions of the Amazons, both in his text and in his gloss, emphasize their choice of disorder in their lives and political conduct. Having killed all their "maschi," they have given themselves over to military arms and live in "follia." When Teseo undertakes to restore proper order, he does so to protect his realm and his subjects from insult. He also fights, as Ipolita herself surmises, because the Amazons are not content to be subject to men (I.26.7-8).

Our first image of Teseo in Book I of the *Teseida* is of an angry lord who

is concerned with justice: "Forte crucciato," we are told, he has resolved to challenge the militant Amazons' "crudeltate" and "dismisura" (1.13). In Boccaccio's argument, and in Aegidius' rule for princes, such anger is regarded as just and it is opposed to another kind of anger which has spite or personal gain as its end. As Aegidius observes, "Rex qui debet esse quasi speculum & forma vivendi, & qui debet esse regula agendorum, inconueniens est quod sit iracundus, ne per iram peruertatur & obliquator" (It is unsuitable that the king, who ought to be like a mirror and form of living, and who ought to be a rule for acting, be full of wrath, or turned awry for wrath and diverted) (1.2.130). Yet, if retribution is sought "for the love and burning desire for justice, or for love of the Republic because without it the Republic cannot endure," then the anger is righteous and good.⁵⁵

Teseo, as a mirror of princely virtue in Boccaccio's dramatization of him, exemplifies not only righteous anger born of a keen sense of justice, but also the fortitude and the prudence necessary for military victory. The Amazons, with their arsenal of pitch and soap as well as darts, arrows, and missiles, prove formidable opponents in war. As Teseo watches the Greeks' failure in battle, he fears that his troops may lose the war. Filled with shame, he nobly arouses himself to continued courage and fierce devotion to his cause, and then he addresses his men to bolster their courage. As Aegidius points out, fortitude in war is more concerned with repressing fear than encouraging boldness.⁵⁶ In addition, he observes, it is more difficult to maintain one's courage steadily during the whole course of a war than to show boldness at the beginning of the fight, because war requires endurance and time.

In fact, Boccaccio seems to have designed the Greek leader's early difficulties in battle, together with his bold reassertion of strength in the face of apparent failure, in order to dramatize the precise nature of Aristotelian princely courage under duress. Once Teseo has regained his own courage by talking to himself, he accuses his men of "vile e tristo adoperare" (vile and miserable behavior) (1.62.3) and asks where their "forza" (fortitude) has fled. While his carefully ordered speech does not win the war immediately (the Amazons are fine warriors), it does stir the Greeks to greater daring and boldness. Following their leader's example, they leave their ships, dive into the water, and swim to shore.⁵⁷

At last, after many battles, and after Teseo has initiated a number of military actions to little or no avail, a new plan occurs to him. He will excavate, creating underground tunnels beneath the walls of Ipolita's fortress (1.95). This extraordinary plan, which leads to an exchange of letters between Ipolita and Teseo (1.99-111) and ultimately brings victory

for the Greeks, has its roots in ancient and medieval military theory. Boccaccio may have drawn the idea for tunneling under the Amazons' walls directly from a classical source. But he would also have found it in Aegidius' *De regimine*, presented as a little-known military technique, worth noting as the first among a short list of unusual stratagems. Through tunnels, Aegidius says, that is "per vias subterraneas" dug deeper than the foundations of the fortifications to be conquered, one can proceed "vsque ad muros munitionis." If this is done, Aegidius claims, it will be easy to seize the fortress.⁵⁸

Boccaccio's introduction of the underground tunnels is worth examining because it allows us to observe the poet in an act of fictive as well as moral invention. The tunneling as a military tactic provides the poet with a narrative idea that carries him for thirty stanzas, more than a fifth of Book 1. Teseo's ingenious strategy, in fact, precipitates the Amazons' capitulation to the Greeks and the magnificent duke's marriage to Ipolita. We have already seen how, in constructing his *Filostrato*, the Italian poet had taken slight material hints from his sources and used them as a basis for unfolding a story. In a comparable way, in the *Teseida*, he uses a classically based military stratagem to generate a key development in his plot. In terms of the poem's underlying moral design, Teseo's last major act of war in Book 1 also allows the poet to complete his narrative study of the first three noble virtues prescribed for the prince by Aegidius: justice, fortitude, and prudence.⁵⁹ It is not without interest that prudence is the virtue which, for Aegidius, especially separates men from women.⁶⁰ Moreover, as Aegidius points out, inventing and carrying forward a successful military maneuver belongs to the virtue of prudence.⁶¹ In Teseo's case, the idea of tunneling as a prudential, ingenious act – rather than straightforward military prowess – wins him the conquest of the Amazons.

From a compositional point of view, Boccaccio's use of the military tunnels in his story may be considered characteristic of his art in adapting borrowed materials for his *roman antique*. The strategy does not simply propel the action forward; it also allows the poet and Teseo alike to display their verbal skill and wit. We do not witness the actual work of digging or the crumbling of Ipolita's fortifications. Such acts would not serve the poet's central intention, which is, as I have been arguing, to dramatize Teseo's exemplary virtues as a moral mirror for princes (and poets). Instead, Boccaccio uses the *idea* of the tunnels to introduce a dialogical form especially congenial to him. He records the contents of the letters exchanged between the two leaders on the subject of the tunnels.⁶² In his epistle to Ipolita, Teseo takes the occasion to sum up and thereby justify his noble purpose in fighting the war. He explains that his goal is the "grande

onor" (1.110.4) he will gain from taking vengeance on "villania." As a further act of prudential strategy, he also takes Ipolita's messengers to survey the strength of his army and to see the underground caves which threaten the walls of her fortress.

The result of Teseo's brilliant initiative is capitulation on the part of the women, which involves, above all, a restoration of natural order in their lives, as Boccaccio and medieval theory conceived it. The final stanzas of Book 1 record joyful celebration as the Amazons return to their proper, feminine identity. They become fresh, beautiful, charming, and full of grace. Giving up their mannish behavior, they resume the modest demeanor, the "vergogna," that had characterized them before they murdered their husbands (1.133). Venus and Hymen preside at the grand nuptials as Teseo weds Ipolita and many of the other Amazons take Greek husbands.

Within this context of appropriate royal celebration, we encounter Ipolita's sister, the young, beautiful Emilia, for the first time and we learn that Teseo plans her marriage to his subject, Achates (1.136-37). This introduction of Emilia, it will be recalled, was the pretext given by Boccaccio as glossator for his long, "prefatory" study of Teseo and the Amazons. The disproportion in the space allotted to Teseo's noble conduct and that allotted to Emilia (136 stanzas for Teseo, two for Emilia) reminds us that, as in the *Filostrato*, Boccaccio uses the physical *space* occupied by the stanzas of his poem as an indirect but important part of his moral argument. The great number of stanzas given to Teseo, his military prowess, and his exemplary virtues in Book 1 metaphorically signals the hierarchical superiority of princely rule and a just social order over matters of love. Boccaccio, like Benoît de Sainte-Maure, offers more than one perspective on his matter. The lover-narrator and the glossator both lure the reader into the poem with promises of a love story. Yet, in fact, Boccaccio, the clerkly, rhetorically ingenious *autore*, uses his important first book to show how the good prince restores the just natural order, an order in which love and women are to be strictly subordinated to social responsibility and the practice of princely virtue. When he conquers Ipolita, Teseo finds love; but he also defines the proper role of women generally as subject to men in legitimate marriage (a concern which, as we have seen, also occupied the *Eneas*-poet and Benoît de Sainte-Maure).

In terms of its formal proportions, Book 11 of the *Teseida* gives us a mirror image of Book 1. If Book 1 ends on a note of joyous love and marital celebration, Book 11 begins with a description of Teseo "da dolce amor distretto,/ in un giardin, pensando a suo diletto" (bound by sweet love, in a garden, thinking of his delight) (11.3.7-8). Such *otiositas* on the part of the

prince, attractive as it may seem, is short-lived, however, in terms of the poem's compositional space. In stanza 4 of the second book, Teseo's old friend Peritoo appears to him in a vision. He admonishes him to give up the idle pleasures of love, inappropriate for princes, and return to Greece. "Gloria" is the subject of his admonition. Teseo has neglected the demands of honor and forgotten his "prodezza" for the sake of a woman and passionate delight.⁶³ By stanza 7, Boccaccio has returned Teseo (and the reader) to a sense of public responsibility, and in stanza 9 the prince sets sail for Athens with his wife and his young sister-in-law, Emilia.

At last, we may suppose, the love story will begin. But once again, in Book II, the *autore* defers the promised delights of "romance" in favor of the larger public, political, and moral concerns that typically vie for attention in the tradition of the *roman antique*. The ostensible *propria materia* of the poem (i.e., love) is to be "transgressed" once more, a chapter-heading tells us, in order to explicate the causes for Teseo's war with Creon (299). Not only does this transgression allow the poet to continue his study of the prince as a mirror of noble secular conduct; it also affords the glossator an opportunity to summarize in the margin of the text the ancient story of the civil war in Thebes and its aftermath. As is always the case with Boccaccio, and with writers in the tradition of the *roman antique* generally, we find ourselves in the presence of parallel stories and juxtaposed voices. These several narratives, placed side by side, "composed" by the *poeta* and the glossator, are designed to contextualize or illuminate each other in the service of encyclopedic knowledge as well as moral wisdom, but in ways that require readerly judgment and discernment.

In this instance, the glossator tells the story of the Theban war, Creon's sudden assumption of royal power, the outrage of the widows, Teseo's merciful help, and the imprisonment of Palemone and Arcita. In fact, through his gloss, Boccaccio is actually providing a kind of "bozzetto" or outline sketch of his story line. Engaging in a compositional sleight-of-hand, he brilliantly weaves his fiction of the two young Theban knights into the received classical history of Thebes.⁶⁴ The poet's fiction gains its authority and its place in the Theban *storia* by being presented in the glossator's scholarly prose before it is unfolded in the poetic composition.⁶⁵

In Book II, Boccaccio builds a contrast between the "fiera crudeltà" and "malefizio" of the "tyrant" Creon (II.12.7; 14.6) and the "reverenza," the "opere magnifiche," the "pietate," and the governing desire to civilize the human heart that characterize Teseo. The poet reframes Teseo's righteous anger and military fortitude by placing him in situations which require several princely virtues not treated in Book I. The battle with Creon, from the moment of the first sounding of the trumpets to the flight of the

Thebans, occupies only seventeen stanzas. The rest of the book shows us Teseo reverently paying homage to the gods (II.23–24); taking pity on the Argive widows (II.37–39); wisely choosing fortitude, duty, and honor over *otiositas* and personal affection (II.40–42); teaching his men the importance of virtue and fame as a way of being human and avoiding the misery of animals (II.44); admiring the temples and “l’altre cose mire” in Thebes; providing “esequie degne” and “grande onore” for his dead enemy, the proud Creon (II.74–75).

Of the six Aristotelian virtues proper to rulers which reside in the intellect, the will, and the irascible appetite, three assume special importance in the second book of the *Teseida*. If Book I concentrates on Teseo’s sense of justice, his fortitude, and his prudence, Book II adds to these habits of mind his *mansuetudo*, his magnanimity, and his magnificence.⁶⁶ It is not without significance that the widows wait for the Athenian leader in the temple of Clemenza (II.17).⁶⁷ When Teseo hears from them about the “aspra tirannia” of Creon and the death of the kings, he feels great sorrow, and, moved by “intima pietà” (II.43), he arouses anger and a desire for honor in his men. He will go at once to Thebes to exact just retribution from the proud tyrant, Creon.

The conceptual framework for this dramatic, moving sequence is not far to seek in neo-Aristotelian political theory. As Aegidius Romanus puts it in his *De regimine principum*: “Ille vero mitis est, qui nec de omnibus cupit vindicatam, nec in tantum deficit à punitione quod nullo modo velit alios puniri, sed est condonatiuus, & punitiuius secundum ordinem rationis” (He is truly merciful who neither desires vengeance in everything nor is deficient in punishment to the extent that he in no way wants to punish others; but he is forgiving and punitive according to the rule of reason) (I, 2, 27, p. 129). *Mansuetudo*, or a sense of mercy, exactly as it is defined in Aegidius Romanus, drives Teseo to desire punishment for malfeasance according to the “ordinem rationis.”⁶⁸

At the end of Book II of the *Teseida*, the poet provides an equally schematic example of the prince’s mercy manifesting itself not in an act of retribution but of forgiveness. As he contemplates the fate of his two young prisoners, Palemone and Arcita, his first intention is to have them killed. He fears that, left alive, they may threaten his realm. Then Boccaccio shows us how the prince changes his mind by means of reason. Since they are not traitors, Teseo decides, debating “fra sé” (within himself) (II.98.1), that he will simply imprison them. Furthermore, he commands that great honor be shown to them in their prison.

As Boccaccio’s narrative argument continues, we discover that princely *mansuetudo* coincides with another key virtue in Teseo – his *magnanimitas*.

Indeed, the poet seems to have designed the prince's stirring speech to his followers to exemplify Aristotelian magnanimity. "It is becoming for kings and princes," Aegidius says, "to be manifest haters and lovers, so that they manifestly hate vice, persecute evils, and do not permit evil-doers to live."⁶⁹ Magnanimity begins with a hatred of vice and a desire for virtue and concludes in great honor for the virtuous. Honor is not sought for its own sake; instead it is a natural consequence of great retributive deeds. As Boccaccio's Teseo speaks to his men, he dramatizes the Aristotelian theory of magnanimity in a particularly stirring way: "Tanto è nel mondo ciascun valoroso,/ quanto virtute li piace operare . . . e noi, acciò che stato glorioso/ intra' mondan potessimo acquistare,/ venimmo al mondo, e non per esser tristi/ come bruti animali e 'ntra lor misti" (Each one is valorous in the world insofar as it pleases him to perform acts of virtue . . . and we came into this world in order to win as much worldly glory as possible, and not to be miserable like brute animals and mixed with them) (II.44).

If Book II dramatizes Teseo's *mansuetudo* and his magnanimity, it also illuminates his magnificence. As Aegidius describes it, the prince ought to be *magnificus* in building magnificent temples, making honorable sacrifices, and organizing worthy ceremonies.⁷⁰ While we do not witness Teseo's architectural enterprises (though he admires the temples in Thebes as he tours the city), we do observe his attention to religious ceremony. These, in Aegidius' terms, are "magne opere" which, unlike houses and public buildings, do not last a lifetime, but occur at various moments through the course of life.⁷¹ Teseo's solemn nuptials at the end of Book I provide a first example of his magnificence in this sense. But Book II offers supporting evidence of several kinds. As the prince enters Athens in a triumphant procession near the beginning of Book II, his subjects greet him with praise for his "opere . . . magnifiche." More importantly, Boccaccio has Teseo go directly to the temple of Pallas upon his return "a reverir di lei la deitade" (to pay reverence to the deity) (23.8).

The prince's second triumphal arrival in Athens, near the end of Book II, follows a parallel pattern. As he returns from his battle with Creon, his subjects treat him with "magnifico onore"; and, once again, he stops to pray, this time at the temple of Mars. With a becoming gratitude, he offers "vitime pietose" as well as prayers of thanks. Perhaps most significantly, besides the processions and the acts of formal reverence to the gods, Teseo displays his magnificence by his concern for performing solemn funeral rites. Not only does he fight with Creon in order to ensure correct burial for the dead kings; he also insists on a suitable funeral with honor for his arrogant enemy once he has killed him (II.74-75).

Books XI and XII

In the two concluding books of the *Teseida*, Boccaccio systematically amplifies his earlier exploration of princely virtue by showing Teseo's magnificent conduct in fresh, movingly personal contexts. Book XI, as everyone will recall, deals with the prince's elaborate, expensive orchestration of Arcita's funeral. Here, building on the good prince's concern for funerals in Book II, Boccaccio dramatizes his "sollecita cura" and liberality as he goes about preparing the young knight's burial with "solenne onore." Teseo himself organizes and oversees the details of the funeral in order to ensure its richness and splendor, commanding that a very old forest of trees be cut down and cleared for the funeral pyre.

Boccaccio also describes the design of the pyre in great detail (XI.26-29). Here we glimpse the prince's magnificence as it manifests itself in his architectural interest. The first tier, like the foundation of a fourteenth-century *palazzo*, is somewhat rough, while the boughs of hewn trees on the second level are carefully intertwined. Flowers and incense adorn the top tier, and the whole is covered with a cloth of tyrian purple sprinkled with gold. To imagine the elegance and order of this grand bier is to understand the prince's *magnificentia* as an earthly but effective means of containing and transcending life's greatest sorrows. The design of the bier is, of course, both the prince's and Boccaccio's. To be sure, Arcita, who speaks from his heavenly perspective at the very beginning of Book XI, offers the possibility of a transcendence and felicity still higher than the prince's. Looking down from the eighth heaven, he observes the vanity of earthly life and the folly of prideful irreverence towards the gods (XI.1-3). Yet Teseo, in Boccaccio's argument, provides a necessary and sufficient earthly parallel for this transcendence in the ceremony he creates for Arcita's dead body. In a dramatic gesture of noble humility and liberality, perhaps modeled on Creon's similar gesture of *pietas* to his dead son in Book XII of the *Thebaid*, the prince even throws his own sceptre, ball, and crown onto the pyre.⁷²

Once Arcita's body has been burned and his ashes placed in an urn, games are organized, "secondo l'antico costume" as the gloss informs us. In this context, with his accustomed modesty and sense of decorum, Teseo actually joins in the games, though he does not participate in the first race or take the first prize. Yet, in the palestral games, at which he excels, he performs so well that Egeo awards him a beautiful shield and decorated trappings for his horse. On the shield, scenes are depicted showing the gods' superiority especially over those who challenge their skills. Apollo conquers the python and wins his musical contest with the irreverent Marsyas. He is also shown sitting in the midst of his nine loving, singing

Muses. In addition, on the horse's trappings, the story of Arachne's challenge to Pallas Athena in the art of weaving is illustrated, together with the challenger's sad transformation into a spider. In a summary way, the shield and trappings seem to epitomize a central feature of Teseo's princely wisdom, his participation in the Muses' civilizing, compositional powers as well as his graceful submission to the gods' superior strength and abilities. The games themselves underscore the prince's large interest in therapeutic forms of recreation, games which are not "ociosa" but humanly useful because they are organized in view of a "debitum finem."⁷³ In this case, the games provide a means for Teseo's subjects to distance themselves from the funeral and gain a new perspective on Arcita's death. In addition, as the prince participates in the competition, we witness his practice of Aristotelian *eutrapelia*, a virtue that involves moderation in play. Neither theatrical nor clownish, he distinguishes himself by a rational, pleasing self-management in games.⁷⁴

If Boccaccio devotes the first part of Book XI to Teseo's magnificence, his liberality, and his *eutrapelia* in the games, the last stanzas belong to Palemone and his budding *magnificentia* (XI.69-91). To the young, grieving knight, Teseo (and Boccaccio) assign the building "con mira operazione" (with wonderful workmanship) of "un tempio grande, bello e elevato" (a spacious, beautiful, and lofty temple) in honor of Arcita and dedicated to Juno.⁷⁵ On the interior walls, Palemone orders scenes to be painted, depicting "tutti i casi d'Arcita," and this art is of such a kind that it inspires *pietà* in the hearts of the Greeks who study it. It is as if, in these wall paintings, Boccaccio were redefining or clarifying the point of his main narrative action by locating its chief episodes within a temple. That is, the whole tale is framed now by a formal aura of reverence for the deities, and especially for Juno, the goddess of marriage.⁷⁶ Arcita's sober *storia* as well as Teseo's exemplary history, we now understand, are to elicit from us that same reverence and compassion or *mansuetudo* which characterize Teseo's conduct in all of the poem's major events. Moreover, the whole story of Arcita's love affair is to be read, at least in retrospect, as an "esempio." As Palemone's epitaph for the dead knight, etched on his golden burial urn, indicates, lovers must beware of excessive passion lest they die as Arcita has: "dunque ti guarda da amore" (so protect yourself from love) (XI.91).

Book XII, the culminating stage in Boccaccio's narrative exploration of princely virtue, concludes Teseo's effort to redirect foolish young love as he arranges a solemn legitimate marriage between Palemone and Emilia. The central event of the twelfth book is a "piato," a public council or *plait* of the kind which, as I showed in chapter 2, organizes a great deal of the *Roman de Troie*. Teseo is, fittingly enough, the principal speaker in the

council. His philosophical rhetoric provides a further palliative for his subjects' grief. Boccaccio devotes fourteen stanzas of the book's eighty-six to the prince's consolatory oration on death and the appropriate human response to it (XII.6-19). His argument is based on human values as well as a reverence for divine power. He admonishes his subjects to recognize the inevitability of death and he counsels those who live always in the face of mortality (that is, humankind) to make a virtue of necessity.

In Boccaccio's argument, Teseo's response to life's ultimate vicissitude involves a degree of difficulty much greater than any other he confronts in the poem. The poet devotes two books to the prince's efforts, architectural, ceremonial, and rhetorical, to ease his subjects' grief and move them towards a state of happiness. Death, unlike the irascible passions of the Amazons and Creon or the concupiscible passions of Arcita and Palemone, remains entirely outside human control in the power of the Fates, that is – as Boccaccio's glosses assure us – under the will of the “*disposizione divina*.”⁷⁷ Teseo can only adopt a position of reverent humility in relation to it, while Palemone leaves the actual event of Arcita's death out of his temple paintings.⁷⁸ Teseo's best advice concerning death is a conventional Senecan *consolatio*: “quando piacere/ sarà di quel che 'l mondo circunscrisse,/ perciò morremo: adunque sostenere/ il piacer dell'iddii lieti dobbiamo,/ poi ch'ad esso resistere non possiamo” (when it will please Him who defines the world's boundaries, we will die; therefore, we ought to support the pleasure of the gods lightly since we cannot resist it) (XII.6.4-8).⁷⁹ For this speech, Boccaccio may have turned directly to one or more of Seneca's several letters and dialogues of consolation.⁸⁰ Or he may have used the pseudo-Senecan *De remediis fortuitorum*, a treatise regularly assigned to Seneca in the Middle Ages and very popular not only in the medieval schools but also at court.⁸¹

If Boccaccio develops Teseo's oration on the pattern of the Senecan consolation, however, he diverges significantly from the Stoics in turning swiftly from Arcite's death to a celebration of legitimate marriage. Marriage is presented as a reasonable, worldly way to restore joy. In Teseo's implied argument, the happiness attendant upon a justly ordered, rational life is the goal in human affairs and it is the prince's responsibility, and his subjects', to ensure such joy. When Palemone, in response to Teseo's oratory and that of other counselors, assents to his proposed marriage with Emilia, he does so in a tone of chaste reverence for Jove and his power (XII.34-37). Boccaccio offers the entire wedding ceremony, which occupies the second half of Book XII, to his readers under the aegis of the “holy ladies,” that is, the nine Muses, who helped Amphion set walls around Thebes. As the poet displays his rhetorical skill in a long, elegant

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descriptio of Emilia, he interweaves erotic appreciation of her body with a fitting sense of chaste decorum (II.53–65). She is, we are told, more beautiful, in Menelaus' opinion, than Helen (XII.67), and she enters the temple of Venus not as a vain, flirtatious maiden (her character in Book III), but as a bride who is "non già gnara" (no longer ignorant) (XII.69.5). A celebratory erotic interest likewise informs the poet's description of the wedding night. Sexual passion, properly sanctified by social approval, assumes, as it had done in the twelfth-century *Eneas*, a legitimate part in the poet's moral program.

Finally, at the end of his work, in his authorial apostrophe to his completed poem, Boccaccio reverently locates the *Teseida* in relation to his classical predecessors. If his is the first vernacular Italian composition to sing of Mars's toils, that is to take up an epic theme, he wants it to be honored among other such (Latin) books. Certainly, he is thinking of the *Aeneid* and the *Thebaid* as those "elders" preceding, and greater than, his poem. And he, like his forebears in the tradition of the *roman antique*, though with more audacity and confidence, does not hesitate to link his *Teseida* with them or to seek comparable honors. What is important is the poet's stance in relation to his great ancestors. He establishes a deliberate, clear hierarchy between the wisdom of the ancients and his own wisdom. Both his art of moral poetry and Teseo's conduct are answerable to the classical tradition.

TESEO AND THE LOVERS: BOOKS III–V

I have taken time to look closely at the first two books of the *Teseida* and the last two partly because they are often set aside or dismissed by critics.⁸² More importantly for our purposes, if we examine these books closely as a framing narrative for the whole work, we begin to understand how the Italian poet designed his moral ground-plan in relation to his narrative *integument*. Like the Judgment of Paris in the *Roman d'Eneas*, the story of Teseo's virtue provides a standard by which to test the poem's dominant fiction. As the *Teseida*'s critical history attests, the poet makes the discovery of his ethical teaching difficult. We must learn to look not only at what Boccaccio *says* in each of his several voices but also at what he *does* with his compositional space. Once we grasp the poet's conceptual argument as it is orchestrated through the narrative *mythos* of Teseo in Books I and II, XI and XII, the rest of the poem falls gracefully into place.

If the first and last two books of the *Teseida* demonstrate Teseo's power to restore natural and moral order, the remaining books show his ability to set youthful erotic passion in comparable order. From a schematic point of

view, Palemone and Arcita exemplify the failure of reason in the face of passion: they are "pueri" who, "quia vsum rationis non habent, non viuunt ratione sed passione" (boys who, because they do not have the use of reason, live not by reason but by passion).⁸³ From a narrative or writerly point of view, however, their story allows Boccaccio to display his learning and skill as a love poet in the Ovidian mold. In Book III, with an elegant sense of polyphony and hierarchical ordering, Boccaccio introduces as his "second" narrative, the love-conflict of Palemone and Arcita, which has been suspended for the length of the first two books. Turning to the "più pio sermone" required for the matter of love, the poet initiates a dialogue between the straightforward, honest language of epic and the "ambages pulcherrime" characteristic of Ovidian love affairs, which were first developed in medieval vernacular poetry by the authors of the French *romans antiques*. In the first two books, the voices of the moral poet and the exemplary prince control the narrative. In Book III, by contrast, the poet, provisionally assuming the voice and sympathies of a lover, invokes the power of Cupid to bring his verses into accord with the "atti insani" of the two young lovers (III.2.1-4).

From Book III until Book x, Boccaccio incrementally exposes the self-destructive albeit lyrical folly and fictions (as well as the voices, language, and topoi) of Ovidian *fine amor* against the continuing background drama of Teseo's legitimate marriage and his noble virtue. In fact, the *Teseida*'s love story proceeds in isolation from the higher values of princely conduct only for the space of forty-six stanzas. In this regard, the poem's spatial composition, its distribution of parts, pervasively argues against the narrator's prologal assertion that the love story is the fiction's principal interest. While the poet gives 237 stanzas to Teseo (Books I and II), he allows only a fifth that number for the lovers and the initial stages of their passion (Books III.1-46). To be sure, the second half of Book III, Book IV, and a good part of Book V explore the conduct of the young lovers. But, in that same space, the poet does not neglect his larger subject, namely the behavior appropriate to princes. Teseo's role as composer of the young knights' lives occupies the central part of Book III, when, in his generous response to his friend Peritoo's request, he releases Arcita from prison. Then, in the latter part of Book V, Teseo reappears in a definitive way to redeem the young knights from their foolishness. From this point until the poem's end, the prince's organizing powers govern the unfolding of the narrative.

As the voices of the learned *autore* and the prince confront those of the lover-narrator and his fictive surrogates, Palemone and Arcita, in Books III-x, Boccaccio yokes two opposed value systems and two different kinds

of literary discourse. In this regard, he does, though with considerably more self-conscious sophistication, what Benoît de Sainte-Maure had done nearly two hundred years earlier in his *Roman de Troie*. Young love, in the poet's argument, belongs to the stirrings of the spring season, to *avventura*, to *Fortuna*, and to natural and animal life. Its language is double and it requires disguise and subterfuge for its enactment. Lovers, moreover, absorb themselves in their personal needs to the exclusion of social responsibility. Princely virtue, by contrast, involves command over the vicissitudes of life (including seasonal change, passionate excess, and changes of fortune). The language of princes is *onesto* and single, and rulers are preeminently concerned with public social order and the need to civilize themselves and their subjects.

Let us turn now to the process of the *finzione* and Palemone and Arcita's experience of Cupid's power as it is recorded in Books III–V. In its first stages, the young knights' amorous history follows closely the pattern of the *Filostrato*'s Troiolo, though the object of their love is not a widow but a very young woman. In their striking first glimpse of Emilia, in their total capitulation to love's darts, in their passionate self-absorption, in their songs and complaints, Palemone and Arcita imitate the behavior of countless other young literary lovers in Ovid, in the French *romans antiques*, and in the romances that followed them.

Like Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Boccaccio ties the young lovers' experience and their "romance" to the theme of *Fortuna*. As he unfolds their love story, he emphasizes their willing participation in Fortune's turning wheel. Arcita, on the verge of leaving prison, for example, declares to Palemone, "Io me ne vo, o caro compagno, / con redine a fortuna abandonate" (I go, O dear companion, with reins abandoned to fortune) (III.75.1–2). By the same token, the poet locates Palemone in love under the aegis of the ever-changing moon. The moon serves as a ruling emblem in Book V when Palemone breaks out of prison in order to pursue his passion for Emilia. For Boccaccio, as for Benoît, *Fortuna* bears a special relationship to lovers *because* they choose passion over reason. In both the *Roman de Troie* and the *Teseida*, according to the poets' shared argument, illegitimate love, that is, love outside marriage, whether youthful passion or incest or adultery, disrupts the good order of society and leads to tragedy. Involving as it does the abandonment of reason and attachment to *Fortuna*, such love *can* be avoided by adherence to higher, rational values. But *Fortuna* and Cupid are powerful forces and cannot easily be set in their proper place. Yet Boccaccio, even more than Benoît, makes the question of causality in relation to the lovers' plight clear. Because they have given themselves over

to a life of change on Fortune's wheel, they neglect their higher responsibilities and lose the inner stability appropriate to heroes and princes.

Furthermore, extending his study of moral causality from Palemone and Arcita's young passionate love to the whole tragic history of Thebes, the Italian poet ties the Thebans' misfortune in general to their endemic preference for illicit love. Jove's adulteries with the women of Thebes, we learn in a gloss, originally stirred the rage of his wife, Juno. As the goddess of matrimony, she harbors a special hatred for the Thebans. In the poet's scheme, this hatred is justified insofar as Thebans have persistently violated the laws of legitimate marriage by incest as well as adultery. The list of offenders against honest marriage includes not only Jove and his Theban mistresses, but also Oedipus and Jocasta, whose incest generated Eteocles and Polynices, protagonists in the Theban civil war. Palemone and Arcita inherit responsibility for the Thebans' violation of legitimate love, but they also participate in it by allowing their passions to rule them in the processes of foolish Ovidian love. For our purposes, it is especially important to understand Boccaccio's (and Benoît's) causal study of illegitimate love in relation to Fortune so that we may better assess Chaucer's somewhat different treatment of the same subject.

Boccaccio develops his narrative of love and Fortune by skillfully playing the story of the young Thebans against the alternative model of Teseo's exemplary conduct and his enlightened understanding of Fortune. In addition, marginal glosses provide an array of mythological tales of tragic love and irreverence towards the gods by which to measure Arcita and Palemone's behavior. Book III records their fall into love as a function of spring and nature. Emilia, too young to know love, but vain and flirtatious, walks in her garden, which adjoins the prison. The two young men, first seeing her, significantly enough, in the obscurity of pre-dawn light, are struck by Cupid's dart. Both of them mistake her for a goddess (mistaking therefore a creature for a deity). And they share their misery and their love by exhibiting all of the symptoms characteristic of Ovidian *fine amor*.

With the turning of the season, however, and the advent of autumn, which occurs at the mid-point of Book III (st. 43), Emilia ceases her garden walks and remains indoors. At the same time, the poet returns us to his epic concerns. Peritoo, visiting his dear friend, Teseo, seeks the release from prison of the noble young Arcita. His aim is to direct Arcita to a life of military honor. To this end, he furnishes him with armor and chargers, saying to him, "non potrai fallire ad alto stato:/ dove ch'arrivi, e' ti sarà donato" (you cannot fail [to win] a high position: wherever you go, it will be given to you) (III.62.7-8).

What Boccaccio emphasizes in the exchanges between Peritoo and Arcita and between Teseo and the young knight is the doubleness of Arcita's speech *because* he is a lover. Teseo, we are told, does not understand Arcita's intention as he pledges his devotion to *Amore*, since the young knight's love is actually for Emilia and not for him: "Teseo cotal parlar non intendea/ donde venisse, ma semplicemente/ di puro cuor le parole prende" (Teseo did not understand whence such speech came, but he took the words simply with a pure heart) (III.58.1-3). Similarly, after Arcita has addressed Peritoo, the poet emphasizes his lack of understanding: "Queste parole facea dire Amore;/ ma Peritoo non le conosceva . . ./ e però pur con purità di core/ lui confortava" (Love made him speak these words, but Peritoo did not recognize it and therefore with purity of heart he comforted him) (III.67.1-2; 5-6). In these exchanges, the poet underscores the conflict between the essential *veritas* in the prince's use of language and the mendacity in the lover's. Speech, as Aegidius advises in his *De regimine*, should be as Teseo's and Peritoo's is, "apertus, & verax, & talem se ostendat, qualis est" (open and true and such that it shows in itself what it is) (I, 2, 131). Because Arcita's love is secret, he is forced into duplicity. He is, in Aegidius' terms, one of those "irones, idest irrisores, & despectores" (dissemblers, that is, mockers and deriders) who pretend that they are what they are not.⁸⁴ Under the influence of love, Arcita cannot, in Boccaccio's argument, aspire to the honor or the truth-telling or the magnificence proper to noble leaders, though Peritoo offers him the opportunity to do so.

The narrative of Book IV, which traces Arcita's travels and his transformation, further develops the young lover's attachment to Fortune as well as his duplicity. Here the subject of metamorphosis, intimately tied to the theme of doubleness and beautiful *ambages*, assumes central importance. Arcita, greatly altered in his physical appearance because of love, takes a new name and assumes the status of a "pover valletto" (IV.22.1). Along parallel lines, in the first part of Book V, Boccaccio explores Palemone's adventures in love. He too enters into a life of duplicity. Assuming a disguise and tricking his guards while they are drunk, he escapes from bondage. Dressed up as a doctor, he walks out of the prison, borrows armor and a horse, and sets out, under a moon which is almost full, to find Arcita. Not only does the moon light his way; Palemone also prays to Latona, goddess of the moon, for help in his enterprise (V, 30-32). The moon which, according to Boccaccio's gloss, "always moves and is moved" (gloss for III, 10) hovers over Palemone's quest as a sign closely allied to the turning of Fortune's wheel and also, inevitably, to the theme of love.

As Boccaccio develops the parallel love stories of Arcita and Palemone,

he juxtaposes their histories with tale after tale of tragic love and impiety towards the gods. These tales are typically drawn from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* or *Heroides*, but the poet also emphasizes the tragic, passionate history of Thebes. The mythological stories appear largely by allusion in the poem proper, and also, in great detail, in the marginal glosses especially for Books III–VII. Parallel stories, narratives set in implied relation to one another, are clearly designed to contextualize each other, to add historical and psychological depth to the poet's study of young, self-absorbing, prideful, irrational love. Jove's adultery with Semele, his rape of Europa, Garamas, and Leda, his affair with Io, Apollo's unsatisfied love for Daphne and his amorous pursuit of Ameto's daughter, Tereus' uncontrolled passion for Philomela and adulterous betrayal of her sister Procne, Oedipus' incestuous union with his mother Jocasta, Pasiphae's lustful, "adulterous" coupling with a bull, Pluto's rape of Proserpina, Narcissus' self-love and consequent death, Mars's adultery with Venus and Vulcan's comic revenge, Leander's fatal love for Hero and Pyramus' for Thisbe, Eristhython's impious disdain for Diana, Actaeon's parallel impiety, and Pentheus' scorn for Bacchus:⁸⁵ all these "novelle" and more literally frame the actions of both lovers at some length in the margins of Boccaccio's text and serve as an implicit commentary on its *storia*. As Ovid's *Metamorphoses* teaches, and the medieval commentators emphasize, such stories of passion typically conclude in a disastrous transformation of human beings into creatures of a lower order.

While Boccaccio does not make the connections between the classical myths and his own tale explicit at every turn, he does give one of his protagonists, Arcita, an Ovidian disguise name, Penteo (iv.3).⁸⁶ What must fascinate us in the poet's choice of Arcita's pseudonym is that the Pentheus of mythology is not a tragic lover. Instead, he is a young man who showed a lack of piety towards the gods, and, in particular, towards Bacchus. This, in Boccaccio's argument, is a failing precipitated by the lover's self-absorption, but of broader scope in its nature and its consequences. Love blinds its adherents so that they attach themselves to the world beneath the moon, governed by Fortune's changes. And in this state of blindness, this "darkened madness," they, unlike Teseo, fail to understand how they may prudently rise above their passions to embrace a life of reason, reverence, and responsibility. By no coincidence, when Arcita ascends to the "concavity of the eighth heaven," he is most struck by the "vanity of the human race which follows the false beauty of the world, setting heaven aside out of the darkened madness and shadowy blindness in their minds" (xi.3). As we listen to Arcita's *post-mortem* reflections on the vanity of human life, we cannot help but recall Boccaccio's pervasive celebration of

Teseo's reason, coupled with Virgilian piety, as it is rewarded by earthly felicity through the course of his poem. The prince's reverence for the gods in whose honor he makes sacrifices after his victories reflects his constant habit of humility, a virtue manifestly absent in Arcita not only as the victor of the joust, but also in his responses to the gods and fate generally.

When, in Book v, the two young Thebans debate in a grove, Arcita rails against Fortune, regarding himself as fully subject to her whims. Rehearsing the long sad history of Thebes (v. 57–59), he blames the deities rather than destructive passion or arrogant scorn for the various disasters. In his diatribe he alludes to many of the stories also told in the poem's glosses: Actaeon, Athamas, Niobe, Semele, his own namesake, Pentheus, Oedipus, Eteocles, Polynices, and Creon all appear as the *dramatis personae* in successive tragedies caused, in his view, by divine disfavor. What Penteo fails to consider in his assessment of his own fate is precisely the larger vision of Fortune and human vanity as he perceives it after his death. He fails, in effect, to penetrate the veil of the classical *finzioni* to understand their moral, psychological, and religious significance. Bound by love's power, alone in the grove with Palemone, he has no available means for revising his worldly, pessimistic, passion-bound, fictive view of himself and his history.

Boccaccio, however, as the composer of the *Teseida* arranges for the first stage in the reformation of Arcita's vision in the latter part of Book v. Near the poem's center, as the two young knights battle with each other, the noble and virtuous Teseo (a guide very different from Pandaro in the *Filostrato*) definitively enters the action once again and he begins immediately to reorder the story of the two young lovers.⁸⁷ From his entrance in Book v until the end of the poem he exercises a princely rationality designed to modify the lovers' conduct and move them towards a reevaluation of their love in terms of higher values. It is not that Fortune and Fate do not exist or exercise their ineluctable power over human lives. In the poet's argument, Arcita's death participates in the mystery of destiny, or, as the gloss names it, the "divina disposizione." What matters, however, is one's attitude towards change and what one perceives as fate. In Book v, Teseo begins by example and direct instruction to lead the two lovers towards an imitation of his own noble conduct and large, rational perspective. But he, like *Philosophia* in Boethius' *Consolatio*, proceeds slowly and with an exemplary compassion. He recognizes at once the "gran follia" of the two lovers; yet, with a fitting "pietate," he acknowledges that he too has been "innamorato" and has committed many follies himself for the sake of love.

This double vision of Teseo's is also the poem's. The poet's purpose is

not to reject Ovidian *fine amor* but to understand it for what it is. He seeks to locate it in relation to self-destructive, unexamined fiction-making on the one hand and to noble princely conduct on the other. In the remaining books of the *Teseida*, in the environment of prudently devised games, a funeral, and a marriage, Teseo displays particularly those virtues appropriate to the prince in his relationships with individuals in his realm. These virtues, which Boccaccio studies systematically from Book v onward, belong to the concupiscible appetite.⁸⁸ According to Aegidius' scheme, which is very like Boccaccio's, they include temperance, liberality, love of honor, truth-telling, affability, and *entrapelia*, a habit which, as we have seen, has to do with perspicacious moderation in taking part in games.⁸⁹ Following Aristotle, Saint Thomas Aquinas, and Aegidius, Boccaccio develops Teseo's virtues of the concupiscible appetite in the environment of Palemone and Arcita's *excessive* concupiscence as they pursue their passion for Emilia. In a comparable way, in Books I and II, he had explored the Amazons' and Creon's *excessive* irascibility in relation to Teseo's moderating virtues of the mind, will, and irascible appetite.

BOOKS VI-X

The first five stanzas of Book VI, which serve as its prologue, are crucially important for understanding the poem's double vision. As Boccaccio embarks on the second half of his composition, he has his narrating "I" speak with a *pietate* as well as a wisdom comparable to Teseo's; in the process, he rereads and reframes Palemone and Arcita's love story. In the first four stanzas, the narrator outlines in an objective, academic way Fortune's undeniable activity as the "alta ministra del mondo" and manipulator of young lovers. This rereading of the text from a detached but sympathetic perspective provides an example for the audience. It is ever-changing Fortune, we learn, that has been responsible for the lovers' "matto imaginare" (insane imagining) and their "furore" in love. While the poem as a whole also casts blame on the lovers because they willingly succumb to Fortune without examining alternatives or controlling their passions, the narrator, like Teseo, offers sympathy and provisional forgiveness for their folly.⁹⁰

Moreover, in the last stanza of the prologue (VI.5) Boccaccio has his teller ask a rhetorical question which brings into focus a struggle enacted over the course of the entire poem. Can "mondani provvedimenti," that is, worldly prudence, in any way offer "sani argomentì" by which to outweigh or transcend Fortune's whims? This is a question which penetrates to the

very heart of the *Teseida* and helps to determine its moral structure. Nor does the poet suggest that the question is easy to answer. If it were, Teseo's conduct and his virtue would seem less impressive and the knights' behavior, simply puerile. What gives the *Teseida* its strength as well as its elegant balance as a poetic argument is precisely Boccaccio's recognition of the very great human difficulty, especially for the young, in confronting the slings and arrows of Fortune, including their own unexamined passions. As the rest of the poem attests, however, Teseo's worldly prudence and his wise judgment *do*, in Boccaccio's argument, have the power to overcome the whims of Fortune, as well as excessive passion, whether of the concupiscible or irascible appetite. His conduct provides a center of stability, wisdom, and felicity for his subjects which allows triumph even over the grief occasioned by Arcita's death.

It is precisely Teseo's stabilizing influence that governs Books VI, VII, and VIII of the *Teseida*. Through the prince's liberality, a virtue of the concupiscible appetite, Palemone and Arcita begin to practice "*larghezza*" themselves. They dress magnificently and entertain their guests by spending "*largamente*." The kings, dukes, and princes who come in the course of Book VI, to Athens for the martial game intensify our impression of magnificent nobility and social order. As the poet gives a leisurely account of their appearance, he draws Palemone and Arcita by example and association into the orbit of appropriate princely conduct.

Book VII is entirely ceremonial in character. Public speeches and private prayers are its principal activities, and, in the course of the book, the two young Theban lovers go through a symbolic *rite de passage*. The poet hints that the two are on the verge of moral maturity as he describes Palemone's nocturnal vigil. It is, he says, "perhaps like the custom of that time when squires were becoming knights" (68). On the morning of the game, in an important symbolic gesture, Teseo girds both young men with swords. In addition, the actions of the two warriors in Books VI and VII dramatize their incipient princely, heroic conduct. Though they continue to be lovers, they live and act magnificently; they accept and obey Teseo's rules for a game designed to bring about a legitimate marriage; they pray to the gods with reverence; and they address their followers with becoming admonitions to honor. It is not without significance that Book VII begins and ends with formal speeches of instruction and exhortation, the first by Teseo, the second, by Arcita.⁹¹ At the beginning of Book VII, Teseo holds a general council, sitting in the midst of the Greek kings in his "*teatro eminente*." His audience, which includes Palemone and Arcita, listens as he explains that the game is to be fought for love, not hatred. In his oration – a masterpiece of princely eloquence and wisdom – he condemns the Thebans

– “seme di Cadmo” (seed of Cadmus)” – who have killed each other in civil war. He also counsels moderation in the martial game and forbids lethal weapons. The outcome of Teseo’s speech is approval on the part of his audience. They praise their “signore” particularly for his “pietoso and grazioso amore” and Palemone and Arcita forthwith draw up their sides for the impending “giuoco.” With an acute sense of aesthetic and moral balance, the poet concludes Book VII with a speech of almost exactly the same length as Teseo’s discourse (eighty-eight lines), but this time spoken by Arcita (eighty-six lines). While Arcita’s oration shows his preoccupation with victory for the sake of winning Emilia, he turns in the latter half to the subject of honor. He urges his followers to seek victory for the love of “crescente fame con memoria/eterna” (VII;141;5–6). His oratory which, we are told, is matched by Palemone’s, illustrates a nascent love of that princely honor already exemplified by Teseo.

The long central part of Book VII – seventy-two *ottave* – is devoted to fervid acts of devotion directed to the gods. Each of the young protagonists, Arcita, Palemone, and Emilia in turn, prays to his or her preferred deity. Besides recording the prayers of each votary, Boccaccio also describes the heavenly abodes of two of the deities, Mars and Venus, to whom the young lovers’ prayers ascend. Moreover, in his schoolmasterly role as glossator, the poet interrupts his poetic descriptions of the heavenly dwellings to interpose the longest *chiose* of the whole composition. In Boccaccio’s holograph of the *Teseida*, these prose glosses occupy both margins of several pages and invite moral reflection. The *poeta*, who has dramatized the activities of Mars and Venus from the start of the *Teseida* in his fiction, now explains in clear, analytic prose their moral and psychic significance. It is as if Boccaccio feared that without such an explanation the moral lessons of his poem might go unobserved.⁹² Yet, at the same time, the glosses, coming as they do fairly late in the fiction, typify the poet’s habitual practice of deferring direct didactic instruction. The reader, tantalized by the *finzione*, is to find great intellectual pleasure in arriving slowly, by reflective rereading, at the poem’s philosophical truths. It is the play between the “difficult” fiction and well-known, but newly imagined moral lessons that offers both the poet and the audience their greatest challenges.

But what are the lessons of these key glosses on the temples of Mars and Venus and how do they illuminate the poem’s moral structure? In his commentary on Mars’s temple, Boccaccio as glossator explains that there are two principal appetites in humans, which urge them in the direction of all kinds of love or hate. The irascible appetite (symbolized by Mars) causes one to be “troubled if delightful things are taken away or impeded, or cannot be had.” The concupiscible appetite (symbolized by Venus) draws

one to rejoice in possessing those things which are delightful or pleasing (gloss for VII.30). Moreover, this same gloss, like the gloss on Venus' temple, makes it clear that the goods sought or opposed by both appetites are always directed by one kind of judgment or another. If the judgment is *ragionevole*, then the individual moves towards a good which is just or opposes an evil for the sake of justice. If, on the other hand, the judgment is *corrotto*, then one moves towards a false delight or opposes a good with an undirected, unreasonable passion.⁹³

In the course of the *Teseida* until Book VII, Boccaccio has dramatized or summarized numerous examples of good and bad judgment with respect to both appetites. The Amazons and Creon are shown to be victims of excess in their irascible rejection of a just, harmonious social order. Palemone and Arcita, together with the many foolish and illicit lovers of classical mythology who enter the poet's argument by way of allusion and *chiose*, illustrate the kind of excessive desire that springs from the concupiscible appetite.

The terms Boccaccio uses to establish the moral basis for his detailed study of princely virtue are, as I have been arguing, Aristotelian and Thomistic; they are also very like those Aegidius chooses in his *De regimine*. Reasoned moderation in judging the desires of the irascible and the concupiscible appetites, according to Boccaccio and Aegidius, leads to just wars and legitimate marriage. Excess, by contrast, results in political disaster and personal tragedy. In Book VII, as Boccaccio presents his theory of judgment and appetite, we observe Palemone, Arcita, and Emilia, all participating, albeit as neophytes, in the reformation of judgment and will. Still governed by desire, as *pueri* and *puellae* are, they offer the wrong prayers. Yet they *do* pray with reverence as they willingly prepare for Teseo's therapeutic, well-ordered game. By no accident, the poem's most explicit moral lessons are carefully located in the environment of the young protagonists' transition from passionate excess or defect to virtuous moderation.

In Book VIII, Boccaccio records the battle-game itself, and this account must be considered a poetic *tour de force*. As Boccaccio assumes the voice and decorum of the epic poet, he, like Teseo, plays with the ceremonies of war, imitating, in a comedic way, the figurative language and topoi of classical heroic poetry. The names of the many great warriors – mainly appropriated from Trojan and Greek history and legend – dominate the action, and epic similes crowd the *ottave*. It is as if the poet, in his ingenious verbal play with classical heroic literary convention, intends to imitate the design of Teseo's noble, moderate game of war. Poetic virtue, like princely virtue, lies in a wise detachment, whether in matters of love or war.

Dramatic intensity, however, is not altogether lacking in the eighth

book of the *Teseida*. Emilia, watching Palemone and Arcita among the others in the fray, turns inward, following the lead of Ovid's *Heroides* and the heroines of the French *romans antiques*. In the course of her inner reflection, which occupies fourteen *ottave*, Emilia, like the *Eneas*-poet's Lavine, acknowledges that she is in love. But her love, like Lavine's, is legitimate. She knows that she must have only one lover who will be, at the same time, her husband. In Boccaccio's moral terms, Emilia manifests her conversion to a good love, one urged by her concupiscible appetite, but also controlled by reason. She shows too the corollary virtues of compassion (part of mansuetude) and reverence for the gods. Significantly, her devout prayer under the painful pressure of the war-game is to Jove, who, in Boccaccio's mythology, always represents the epitome of reason and justice.

By the end of Book VIII, Palemone has been felled, Arcita has claimed victory, and Emilia appropriately turns her thoughts exclusively to the winner of the game. But, even as the narrator records the stages leading to Arcita's apparent triumph, he introduces a pervasive note of doubt. And he leaves his young hero on horseback in the book's last *ottave*. Arcita, it appears, remains on his horse *because* he has "tutto vinto" but only "as it seems to him." The doubt, of course, is justified. Book IX opens with an ominous reflection on "doloroso fato." At the same time, fate is closely linked to Arcita's great pride in his victory and it coincides with the poet's general comment on the heavy falls likely to punish those who raise themselves up in the world.

Boccaccio's elaborate *finzione* concerning Arcita's fall from his horse is worth studying because it brings into sharp focus the calculated tension between the poetic covering or fiction and the author's underlying study of moral causality. *False* causes for the fall are presented, as the *chiose* tell us, in the fiction. The conflict between Mars and Venus is put forward as the reason for the fall. Venus, we learn from the poet's elaborately mythographic explanation, ordered Erinyes, one of the furies, to frighten Arcita's horse. But, as the gloss informs us, Erinyes is only a fiction which the poet invents to "explain" the horse's fright. In fact, such events are commonplace. Horses are often frightened by one thing or another.

At one level, then, such an event is to be accounted an accident, a chance happening, a "caso doloroso" (IX.10.2). At a second level of causality, however, as the narrative implies, Arcita's pride precipitates the fall. Because he has climbed "high above the enameled green," riding his horse with a great sense of triumph, he falls. His image as his horse falls is not unrelated to the familiar iconographic image of Pride as a man falling from his horse.⁹⁴ In Arcita's case, the horse falls backward and the rider with it.

His failure to direct his irascible and concupiscible appetites correctly, manifest in his excessive love of victory and his overwhelming desire to impress Emilia, seems to precipitate his fall. That the poet and the glossator provide more than one way of thinking about the cause for Arcita's fall, even suggesting divine intervention, is centrally important for Boccaccio's large study of princely virtue. If Arcita is partly responsible for the accident, he also participates in a mysterious scheme known only in the divine providential scheme for humankind.

From a compositional point of view, Boccaccio uses Arcita's fall to initiate a study in Book ix, of princely virtue, humane philosophy, and public ceremony at a new, moving depth. Arcita, humbled by his mortal fall, perceives his victory in a fresh light even as Teseo organizes an elaborate triumphal procession for him. His progress towards moral maturity greatly speeded by his unfortunate accident, he wears his laurels with a newly won awareness of his own fragility and the fragility of his triumph. As the victor enters Athens in a "*carro triunfale*," together with Emilia, he is full of joy, yet still dazed by his fall. With the greatest delicacy, Boccaccio records a tender love between Arcita and his bride-to-be, strongly colored by an awareness of the young Theban's tragic injury.

In the course of the great ceremonial procession, we witness Arcita's "*magnification*" as he shares in Teseo's magnificence. We also observe his generosity (another sign of magnificence) towards Palemone and the other prisoners taken by his side in the game. They march, unhorsed, in the procession, but also without chains, thanks to Arcita (47). Wounded though he is, Arcita is celebrated as a hero in the procession and as a fitting successor to Teseo. At the same time, Palemone too enjoys an elevation to military honor. Teseo, addressing the losers in the game and praising their valor, attributes the outcome to "*divina provedenza*" rather than to any fault of the combatants (52). Here, the prince's *reverenza* provides a means of absorbing both defeat and death as part of the divine scheme of things. Emilia likewise honors Palemone, giving him an elegant set of armor to start him on his career as a hero.

Though Book ix ends with the wedding of Arcita and Emilia, Boccaccio devotes only a single *ottava* to it. Then, in Book x, he returns insistently to the theme of death. Early in the morning of the very night Arcita marries Emilia, the Greeks steal out to prepare a funeral pyre for those who have died in Teseo's war-game. The poet next directs attention to Arcita's imminent, certain demise, which will occupy the rest of the book. The doctor who is attending him declares his case hopeless unless a divine miracle intervenes. In this momentous event, Arcita becomes the princely master of ceremonies, actually superseding Teseo. He wants, we are told, to

"disporre" all that he can before he dies (16, 8). The urge to arrange or dispose matters wisely is a prince's as well as a poet's intention, and Arcita, on the threshold of death, elegantly assumes their principal function.

Nearly half of Book x (forty-seven *ottave*) is given over to Arcita's several speeches as he addresses, in proper hierarchical order, each of the poem's protagonists. First, he advises Teseo to give his new wife Emilia to Palemone after his death. Then, he formally explains to Palemone how he should treat Emilia and how he should manage his public life. He must "honor and care for her" and he must generate offspring to restore the fame of Thebes.⁹⁵ He must also conduct himself with such valor that he will bring honor to his ancestors. Here, in the throes of death, Arcita wisely embraces just those values of legitimate marriage, valor, honor, and magnificence, for which Teseo had stood since Book 1. His perspective, at death's door, gives him an authority at least as great as the prince's, and he understands at last how to value a life of social and rational responsibility. The erstwhile young, foolish lover has become a knight of noble virtuous substance.

When Arcita addresses Emilia, the close conjunction between his love and his impending death (no mere metaphor as it so often is in courtly love poetry) is his theme. Here too a hierarchy is implied between mortality and passionate love. The love itself assumes a new depth as it is juxtaposed with Arcita's liminal condition. On the verge of death, he now incorporates passionate love in a larger vision of life. With a princely and reverential generosity he offers Emilia his dear friend Palemone in marriage as a suitable mate whom "i fati" have granted her.

Arcita's last acts, once he has kissed his wife, Emilia, are, appropriately, acts of reverence towards the gods and an elegiac lament for his own passing. The dying Theban arranges a worthy sacrifice for Mercury, who will conduct him to his afterlife. "Prepare for me," he tells Palemone, "[V]ittime degne e olocausti . . . decenti e fausti" (proper and decorous victims and holocausts) (90.7-8). As the smoke from the sacrifices rises towards heaven, Arcita prays to his psychopomp in such a way that he can be heard by those around him. In his prayer, he locates himself justly in relation to his passionate, cruel ancestors. He has *not* participated in their sins and therefore he asks Mercury to bring him to Elysium. After his prayer, turning to all those he must leave, Arcita utters a moving elegy, a song of grief for all the joys of love and honor he must leave behind. Not only Emilia, but also his horses, Palemone, Peritoo, Teseo, Egeo, and Peleo, the "gioco" and "festa" and "piacere/ con principi e con donne e cavalieri" (play and feasting and pleasure with princes and ladies and knights) (110.3-4) – all these friends and pleasures will vanish for him.

The *Teseida* and Aristotelian virtue

Arcita's final earthly vision summarizes a touchingly human, worldly view of life's attractions, one which will be neatly countered by the opening stanzas of Book xi.

THE *TESEIDA*'S CONCLUDING CELEBRATION OF LEGITIMATE MARRIAGE

From the suprahuman perspective of immortality at the beginning of Book xi, Arcita's spirit, as we know, revises his, and every other earlier assessment in the poem of the world's gifts. With awe, he admires the beauty and order of the heaven of the fixed stars, and he laughs to himself at the Greeks' "pianti dolenti" (sorrowful laments), condemning the "vanitate" of human kind and their "tenebrosa cecitate" (gloomy blindness) (xi.3.1, 2, 4). When, in Book xii, Teseo delivers his Senecan speech on death as a prelude to the marriage of Palemone and Emilia, he does so in order to subordinate death definitively, as Arcita had done in a different way, to a higher good. The "magnifica festa" that occupies the *Teseida*'s concluding stanzas – and the marriage that gives legitimacy to Palemone's passion – unequivocally supersede Arcita's death. In the end, Boccaccio's poem, like the twelfth-century *Eneas*, celebrates a sound political marriage. At the same time, however, the Italian poet, borrowing probably from Martianus Capella, illustrates, through Teseo's conduct and his noble discourse, the metaphoric marriage of eloquence and wisdom – a marriage Teseo shares with the poet. In Boccaccio's skillful appropriation of Senecan consolation for Teseo's speech, he manages, as Chaucer will not in the *Knight's Tale*, to give Arcita's death a final form within a larger, confidently triumphant, fundamentally Aristotelian view of human life.

Boccaccio's compositional achievement in the *Teseida*, as I have outlined it in this chapter, is grander than that of the *Filostrato*. But in both poems his aim is to explore academic moral values – including the value of Ovidian *fine amor* – through a multiplicity of perspectives within the medium of an elegantly composed and orchestrated ancient *storia*. In the *Teseida*, he balances the voices of his narrator and his lovers with the alternative perspective of the princely Teseo. To point the way to the truth veiled in the fiction, the glossator gradually reveals in the margins the wisdom central to the *author's* design. In celebrating the prince and the poet's sagacity (key subjects too in the tradition initiated by the French *romans antiques*) Boccaccio also demarcates the power and limits of an asocial Ovidian love as he depicts the passion of Palemone and Arcita for Emilia. The result is a rich comparative study of foolish young love in relation to

legitimate political marriage as both of these kinds of relationship enter into and affect the virtuous conduct of princes and the political life of kingdoms.

Statius' Latin *Thebaid* and the twelfth-century French *Roman de Thèbes* had recorded the tragic fall of Thebes. By contrast, Boccaccio's *Teseida* offers a comedic continuation and redirection of that history. With the reconciliation of Arcita and Palemone and the latter's ceremonial marriage to Emilia, the Theban royal line is given new life. Moreover, if, as is generally believed, Boccaccio began composing the *Teseida* before he left Naples, he may originally have conceived the poem with a specific contemporary situation in mind. The politically expedient wedding of the foreign prince, Palemone, to Teseo's sister-in-law may initially have been designed to celebrate King Robert's equally expedient marriage of his granddaughter and his great nephew.

Like Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Boccaccio, as the *autore* in both his early experiments in the form of the *roman antique*, tends to "disappear" within the texture and the metaphoric space of his multivoiced and multiformal narrative compositions. Like Benoît too he subscribes fully to the academic, classically based wisdom of the medieval schools, implicating both ancient and "modern" *sapientia* in his poetic compositions. Certainly, he makes the recovery of this wisdom more difficult by far than Benoît or the other authors of the *romans antiques* had. But the Italian poet's finely made, intricate fictions hold out the promise of clear intellectual and moral understanding for those who read them with *sana mente*. Of course, the details of the narrative may, by their very nature as concrete, irreducible storial *instances*, invite interpretations of events (and virtue) other than those "officially" intended. This is a danger (or a poetic possibility) Boccaccio courted in composing both his *Filostrato* and his *Teseida* as *storie*. Through them, he, like his French predecessors in the tradition of the *roman antique*, raises important ethical questions in such a way as to encourage various interpretations. But Boccaccio himself, it seems to me, constructs his poems so as to elicit an ideal reading along the lines I have suggested in this chapter and the last. At the same time, the densely detailed narratives also provides enough internal tension to allow their public alternative views of the ancient characters' conduct.⁹⁶

"DIFFICULT" POETRY: BOCCACCIO *VERSUS* CHAUCER

In the early spring of 1341, shortly after Boccaccio had left for Florence, Francis Petrarch arrived in Naples in order to be examined by Robert of

Anjou with a view to qualifying himself for the poet-laureateship.⁹⁷ Petrarch must have chosen King Robert because of his wide reputation as a patron of scholars and artists in all disciplines.⁹⁸ For three days, the well-known author answered questions in public in front of the court on all the liberal arts, but especially on the nature and functions of poetry. According to Boccaccio, in his life of Petrarch, the would-be laureate managed to give Robert a new appreciation of the classical poets.⁹⁹ He also defended himself successfully in response to Robert's pointed question: "What use can the people derive from poetry and what benefit can it bring to poets themselves, to the state, and to humanity?"¹⁰⁰

We may surmise that Petrarch gave Robert a definition of poetry not unlike the one he put forward when he delivered his address as laureate on the Campidoglio in Rome a few days after his examination.¹⁰¹ "Between the office of the poet and that of the philosopher and the historian, whether moral or natural," he declared:

there is the same difference as that between a cloudy and a clear sky: while there is in each of them clarity as to subject, they differ in respect to capturing their audience. Poetry acts more sweetly, on account of which truth is sought with greater difficulty and soothes by a greater inventiveness.¹⁰²

Not only does Petrarch distinguish, in well-known terms, between the veil or cloud of fiction and the clarity of truth; he also explains the importance of difficulty in poetry. The "inventiveness" of a poem and its sweetness should serve, in Petrarch's definition, as useful obstacles, straining readers' intelligence and imagination in order to give them delight in their quest for philosophical wisdom.

Boccaccio was almost certainly not present at Petrarch's examination. Yet, in his *Teseida* as well as his *Filostrato*, the young Certaldese *autore* seems to have been thinking of his own poetry and his responsibilities as a poet in terms very like Petrarch's.¹⁰³ In his much later discussion of poetry in the *Genealogie*, Boccaccio concurs entirely with Petrarch in a way that seems applicable even to his early experiments in the tradition of the *roman antique*:

I . . . grant that poets are at times obscure, but invariably explicable if approached by a sane mind . . . Surely no one can believe that poets invidiously veil the truth with fiction, either to deprive the reader of the hidden sense, or to appear the more clever; but rather to make truths which would otherwise cheapen by exposure, the object of strong intellectual effort and various interpretation, that in the ultimate discovery they shall be more precious.¹⁰⁴

Again, speaking of the effort readers must make to uncover the truths hidden in the fictive surface, Boccaccio writes:

I repeat my advice to those who would appreciate poetry and unwind its difficult involutions. You must read, you must persevere, you must sit up nights, you must inquire, and exert the utmost power of mind. If one way does not lead to the desired meaning, take another; until, if your strength holds out, you will find that clear which at first looked dark.¹⁰⁵

As I have argued in this chapter, the *sen* or moral meaning of the *Teseida*, like that of the *Filostrato*, once discovered, is seen to be a well-known part of contemporary academic and courtly discourse. For Boccaccio, as for Petrarch in his inaugural address, the difficulty and the pleasure for readers of poetry lie in their ability to discover the poet's narrative play with the subject, almost as one would uncover the underlying themes in a complex musical composition or the familiar ground melody in an intricate piece of jazz.

It is important to clarify the exact nature of difficult poetry as Boccaccio enacts it in the *Filostrato* and the *Teseida* in order to come to terms with Chaucer's significantly different kind of difficult poetry. In the *Book of Troilus and Criseyde* and in the *Knight's Tale*, a new sort of epistemological obliquity enters into the tradition of the *roman antique*. Boccaccio follows the lead of his French predecessors in claiming a full, philosophical understanding of his pagan matter, though, unlike his French forebears, he makes the discovery of that understanding deliberately and delightfully difficult. For Chaucer, by contrast, the ethical and metaphysical issues raised by his poems are more difficult to penetrate than their poetic coverings. By the very form of his poems, Boccaccio implies a hierarchical relationship between the wisdom of his books and that of his Latin exemplars. He also assumes that the full truth of his narratives (that is, his moral argument) is available to his ideal reader. Chaucer, by contrast, takes as his subjects some of the deepest, most problematic issues of the human condition and he raises questions about them which, his argument suggests, cannot be fully answered, at least by "pagan" (which is to say secular, empirically, rationally, or imaginatively based) poetic fictions.

Moreover, the English poet does not explicitly align his authorial wisdom (or the wisdom of authority figures in his texts) with that of the ancients or the schools in a dynastic or centric way. Instead, he uses what we might call a principle of adjacency.¹⁰⁶ He introduces competing literary and philosophical approaches to the secular experiences of love, chance, change, and death in human life.¹⁰⁷ He draws his readers into the midst of various positions on these subjects, and he invites comparison of the several claims to truth, not only in relation to competing narratives but also in relation to the reader's experience of the world outside the text. Philosophical and moral questioning had been, as I argued in chapter 2, a

The *Teseida* and Aristotelian virtue

defining feature of the medieval *romans antiques* from their inception in the twelfth century. But it remained even in Boccaccio's brilliantly inventive fictions more a poetic strategy than a means of dramatizing unsettling epistemological problems. When Chaucer poses his questions about human love, life, and death in his two great poems in the tradition of the *roman antique*, he does so without offering a single, unequivocal, earthly solution even for the ideal reader. As we shall see in the next two chapters, his ethical questions remain incompletely resolved and his poetic coverings intransitive. His fictions bind both his pagan characters and his readers to fallen human language, leaving them for the most part in the realm of images, metaphors, dreams, and possibilities.

Saving the poetry: authors, translators, texts, and readers in Chaucer's *Book of Troilus and Criseyde*

With his usual fastidious attention to “effects,” Chaucer’s Pandarus, ever guiding his young protégé towards pleasure, tells Troilus how to write his first love letter. “Hold,” he says, “of thi matere/ The forme alwey, and do that it be lik” (II.1039–40).¹ These instructions, adapted from Horace’s *Art of Poetry*,² do not appear in Boccaccio’s *Filostrato*. Through them Chaucer deepens Pandarus’ characterization as a craftsman, shaping his materials by his dazzling manipulations of *trouth*, *sooth*, and *aventure*. In the event, Troilus manages to follow his master’s advice exactly. He produces an epistle filled with sentimental commonplaces – “thise . . . termes alle/ That in swich cas thise loveres alle seche” (II.1067–68). In his *modus tractandi*, moreover, the young lover follows precisely the medieval “forme” prescribed for such epistles. Beginning with an elaborate salutation, he moves to a petition, adds a *narratio*, and concludes with a promise of endless fidelity. Nor is Troilus’ love letter the only example, in Chaucer’s masterpiece, of a literary form perfectly calibrated to “hold” its *matere*. The lover’s several complaints and formal lyrics (including a Petrarchan sonnet translated into rhyme royal), Antigone’s love song in Book II,³ Calkas’ oration in Book IV, all conform to rules prescribed by tradition and theory.

When we ask, however, what large “forme” Chaucer himself chose to contain the ancient, tragic matter of Troy as he composed his medieval *Book of Troilus and Criseyde*, no simple answer presents itself. Though Calkas knows, as he tells the Greeks, “in what forme” Troy will fall (IV.78), Chaucer allows his narrator no comparable power of control. Scholars seeking to categorize his poem have – often with some discomfort – labeled it a romance, an epic, a tragedy, a novel, a history, or some combination of these.⁴ Several critics have refused it membership in any traditional genre. Thus one of the poem’s most astute readers, Charles Muscatine, says of it:

Because of its particular range of style, the *Troilus* can be called neither romance nor realistic novel. Though it has traits common to both, it cannot even be called both . . . The *tertium quid* created by the interplay of . . . styles and . . . philosophical positions is best called a genre unto itself, for the result is a qualitative difference

Chaucer's *Book of Troilus and Criseyde*

from the romance or novel that requires a different kind of attention from the reader.⁵

Much more recently, Paul Strohm has likewise resisted any single generic label: "*Troilus*," he says, "embeds the most varied narrative structures – invocation, *proces*, epistle, song, complaint, vision – within a narrative whole that constantly shifts its own coordinates, from tragedy to history to romance and back to tragedy again."⁶

Muscatine, Strohm, and others have had good reason to puzzle over the genre of *Troilus and Criseyde*. The poem itself is, as Elizabeth Salter once wrote of it, "a work of variable and fluctuating allegiances, of co-ordinate rather than complex construction."⁷ But there is another reason why scholars have been so thoroughly uncertain about the poem's genre. Almost no one has looked to the tradition of the *roman antique* – to Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie*, the *Roman de Thèbes*, Boccaccio's *Filostrato* and his *Teseida* – as *formal* models for Chaucer's *Troilus*.⁸ It is not that tradition alone can account for Chaucer's radically experimental masterwork. Whatever it is named, the poem refuses to conform simply to the literary past it inscribes. But it is clear that the English poet composed *Troilus* in direct and constant response to the specific group of ancient and medieval texts we have been examining in this book.

In its compositional strategies and also in its ethical interests, *Troilus* is more like its principal sources – Benoît's *Troie* and Boccaccio's *Filostrato* and *Teseida* – than it is, for example, like Boethius' *De consolazione philosophiae* or either part of the allegorical *Roman de la rose* or Virgil's *Aeneid* or Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* or Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*. Whatever one wishes to name the *Book of Troilus*, its deepest formal debt is to the French and Italian tradition we have been considering up to this point. Though Chaucer's innovations are substantial, his poem represents not a break with the tradition but a brilliant new development of it. As several recent scholars have observed, *Troilus and Criseyde* participates in and comments on its own late-fourteenth-century English, courtly milieu.⁹ But the poem's sociohistorical concerns are powerfully mediated by the writer's compositional practices. We can, I think, legitimately address Chaucer's responses to the "dynamic historical forces of his own period"¹⁰ only after we have understood how he "translated" his direct literary predecessors, both ancient and medieval.

FINE AMOR AND THE TRANSIENCY OF THE MORTAL WORLD

Few readers of *Troilus and Criseyde* have doubted that love is one of the poem's principal subjects, if not its most important subject.¹¹ Yet, though

the place of love in the poem has been often and well discussed, Chaucer's elaboration and rewriting of his principal sources in this matter requires deeper inquiry than it has received. The authors of the French *romans antiques*, strictly concerned, as we saw in chapter 3, with secular morality, had examined Ovidian *fine amor* in terms of its personal, social, and political consequences. Boccaccio, like his French predecessors, mounts a subtle critique of Ovidian love in his *Filostrato*, but one that focuses most insistently on the personal woe and loss of self caused by erotic passion and changeable women. In his *Teseida*, he takes on a larger task, locating his study of private, self-destructive *fole amor* within the broader context of princely conduct, social responsibility, and political marriage. The *Teseida*, like the *Roman d'Eneas*, celebrates the triumph of erotic love – but a love modified to accord with legitimate marriage.

Chaucer likewise makes Ovidian *fine amor* of the kind described in chapter 3 a moral fulcrum in his *Troilus*, and his modes of commenting on it include the practices both of the French *romanciers* and of Boccaccio. Like Benoît de Sainte-Maure and Boccaccio in the *Teseida*, he uses history – specifically the fall of Thebes and Troy – to reflect negatively on Troilus' *tragedye*.¹² Like Boccaccio in the *Filostrato*, he also allows Troilus' subjective, lyrical account of his love to draw us sympathetically into his experience even as we witness the woeful consequences of his folly. But Chaucer adds to the arguments of his predecessors (and *a fortiori* of Ovid) much larger questions. He explores the metaphysical nature of loving "paramours" as its participates in the transiency of all earthly, mortal loves.¹³ In Chaucer's argument, the erotic attachment called "love" is subject to misreading, change, and the whims of Fortune, just as everything else in the mortal world is.

Chaucer has his Troilus provide the first moral mirror for lovers within the bounds of his "ancient" narrative – a mirror that is traditional, critical, and distanced. Near the beginning of Book I, in a Chaucerian elaboration of the *Filostrato*, the young Trojan observes how some of his fellow knights and squires, walking in the temple, sigh and "feed" their eyes on women. Troilus "wolde," the narrator tells us (in a gesture that does not appear in Boccaccio), "smyle and holden it [i.e., their conduct] folye" (1.194). He has never been in love himself, but he has heard how lovers behave, and he declares, presumably to instruct his foolish companions: "veray fooles, nyce and blynde be ye! / Ther nys nat oon kan war by other be" (1.202–3). The kind of love he deems foolish is, as Troilus puts it, economically commenting on Ovid's expressed *intentio* in the *Ars amatoria*, laborious in the "wynnyng," uncertain in the "kepyng," and woeful in the losing (1.199–201).¹⁴ Once Troilus has fallen into *fine amor*, the narrator wonders

for us whether his hero's new passion is "for wisdom or folye" (1.452), raising a question the whole poem, like earlier *romans antiques*, proposes to explore. In another Chaucerian in-etching later in Book 1, Pandarus reflects Troilus' first critical, uninvolved view of foolish love back to him. "For thow were wont to chace," he says, "At Love in scorn, and for despit him calle/ 'Seynt Idiot, lord of thise foles alle'" (1.908-10). But Pandarus' reminder is not designed to return Troilus to his early position or correct his folly. Instead, he persuades his protégé to seek Love's forgiveness for his "japes" and to reject his clerkly ideas about *fole amor* in favor of his own pseudo-sacral celebration of love's "grace." The transformation Pandarus works in his long speech to Troilus (1.904-65), partly drawn from Ovid's *Remedia amoris*, is a linguistic one, but one that supports Troilus' new desire. It is, in its general contours, not unlike the similar transformations of *fole amor* worked by the *Eneas*-poet, first through Anna and Dido, then through Lavine. Dido gives up faithful love of her dead husband, it will be remembered, and embraces Ovidian *fole amor* because desire and Anna's rhetoric persuade her. Lavine moves, by contrast, through her self-analysis, *away* from duplicitous Ovidian passion to a higher form of faithful love sanctioned by her intuition.

In Chaucer's poem, Pandarus, like Anna, serves the powerful lure of Ovidian desire. He encourages Troilus to spurn his earlier view of love as uncertain, woeful, and therefore foolish in favor of his own self-interested notion of love as attainable pleasure. Chaucer enacts his hero's actual conversion from one view to the other as the central epistemological drama of Book 1. Pandarus, by persuading Troilus that Love has "converted [him] *out* of wikkednesse" (1.999), justifies his desire and thereby suppresses the first, negative view of erotic passion presented in the narrative proper.

As Troilus himself draws us into the experience of his changed heart, moreover, he involves us in the deepest questions about the nature of his new-felt love. Weaving a Petrarchan sonnet into his narrative, Chaucer has his hero comment quizzically on his new condition:

If no love is, O God, what fele I so?
 . . .
 Al sterelees withinne a boot am I
 Amydde the see, bitwixen wyndes two,
 That in contrarie stonden evere mo.
 Allas, what is this wondre maladie?
 For hote of cold, for cold of hote, I dye. (1.400; 416-20)

From his initial, seemingly fixed condemnation of love's "folye," Troilus, suddenly overwhelmed by passion, inquires for us, in Petrarchan para-

doxes, how substantial his new condition is. It is part of the poem's task to unsettle its audience by inviting us to share just the deep questions Troilus himself asks. What is love and, concomitantly, how is it that love and lovers are ever vulnerable to change?

Chaucer's Criseyde, like his Troilus, is explicitly aware of the risks and suffering involved in Ovidian *fole amor*. As she debates with herself in Book II, she epitomizes the same dangers of love that had occupied the authors of the French and Italian *romans antiques*, bringing into special relief her personal concerns:

Allas! Syn I am free,
Sholde I now love, and put in jupartie
My sikernesse, and thrallen libertee?
Allas, how dorst I thenken that folie?
May I naught wel in other folk aspie
Hire dredfull joye, hire constreinte, and hire peyne?
Ther loveth noon, that she nath why to pleyne.

For love is yet the mooste stormy lyf,
Right of hymself, that evere was bigonne;
For evere som mystrust or nice strif
Ther is in love, som cloude is over that sonne.
Therto we wrecched wommen nothing konne,
Whan us is wo, but wepe and sitte and thinke;
Oure wrecche is this, oure owen wo to drynke. (II.771-84)¹⁵

Criseyde's penetrating commentary on the folly of loving includes social and political values, but Chaucer has her focus most fully on her fear of losing personal stability and well-being. Though she, like Ovid's Helen in *Heroides* xvii and like Boccaccio's Criseida, does worry about honor and public opinion, her deeper interest is in her own *sikernesse*. Unlike many of Ovid's letter writers in the *Heroides*, who have not protected themselves from faithless lovers (and are therefore *stultae*), Chaucer's Criseyde, like Boccaccio's heroine, considers beforehand what she may lose by loving.¹⁶

But Criseyde, poised, as it happens, to change her mind and slide into love, also adds her own (and Chaucer's) metaphysical questions about the unknown origin and insubstantiality of love. She ponders its evanescence in a way that touches the poem's most pressing concerns:

To what fyn is swich love I kan nat see,
Or wher bycometh it, whan that it is ago.
Ther is no wight that woot, I trowe so,
Where it bycometh. Lo, no wight on it sporneth;
That erst was nothing, into nought it torneth. (II.794-98)

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These questions – having to do with transiency, unknowability, and nothingness in relation to love – greatly deepen the field of inquiry surrounding *fole amor* in the poem. Like the character of Criseyde herself, and like many other Chaucerian touches, they come to bear finally on the philosophical issues of mortal changeability, limitation, and loss which the whole of *Troilus and Criseyde* poses.

THE PROLOGUE TO BOOK I AND CHAUCER'S NARRATING PRESENCE IN *TROILUS AND CRISEYDE*

Let us turn to Chaucer at his writing desk. As he began composing the prologue to Book I of *Troilus* (and to the poem as a whole), he probably had before him at least Benoît's *Roman de Troie*, Boccaccio's *Filostrato* and *Teseida*, Joseph of Exeter's *Bellum Troianum*, and Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis Troiae*.¹⁷ Mulling over the problem of presenting himself in his text, he clearly considered how his predecessors had characterized themselves. In their prologues, all of them, save Boccaccio, had explicitly raised the question of telling the truth about Troy in opposition to the "[ancient] poet who plays with fictions."¹⁸ Benoît de Sainte-Maure, following Cornelius Nepos, had rejected Homer's mendacity in favor of Dares' "eye-witness" prose account of the Trojan War. Joseph of Exeter, condemning the poetry of Virgil as well as Homer, had proposed to bypass the "ancient confusion of poets" in favor of truth-telling.¹⁹ Guido delle Colonne, promising to extricate truth from falsehood, had accused not only Homer and Virgil but also Ovid of embracing error in their fictions about Troy.²⁰

With a strong tradition of medieval "truth tellers" behind him Chaucer might well have chosen to follow Benoît or Joseph or Guido, arguing as they had that the full truth about Troy's fall could be written. Instead, he prefers Boccaccio's affectively focused, "poetic," Ovidian treatment of Troilus' adventures in love. And, near the end of his poem, he aligns his composition with just those poets whose "versuta vestigia" (cunning footsteps) most of his direct predecessors had rejected as fictitious.²¹ This particular alignment has to do, I think, with Chaucer's plan to explore in his *Troilus* the problem ancient (and modern) poets necessarily face in taking as their subject the history of Troy as a record of "worldly vanyte." How can one write truthfully about or represent the illusions that constitute empirical reality in the mortal world? Must not the secular poet's writing *imitate* the ways in which we compound these illusions, habitually creating for ourselves impressions of stability or permanence in the midst of the world's essential transiency? Can poets, whether ancient or modern, who

take the *saeculum* – epitomized by the matter of Troy – as their subject, record any truth except the truth of mendacity and mutability? Will not such poets necessarily follow with “cunning footsteps” the winding ways of change, deception, and treachery? Must they not write per force “in figurata commenta” and “by means of certain fictions”?²² Insofar as they remain true to their subject, the best that worldly poets can do is to give tenuous, fictive form and passing beauty to all the treacheries secular history, human passion, and mortal language perpetrate in their tumultuous, ephemeral course. Yet always in such writing, if it is responsible, the world’s and our own lies and illusions will somehow be revealed for what they are within the boundaries of the poetry.

Speaking through his teller in the first two stanzas of his opening prologue, Chaucer follows precisely the pattern of the medieval *accessus* used by schoolteachers to introduce the great Latin *auctores* and adapted by the authors of the French *romans antiques*. Like the *Thèbes*-poet and Benoît de Sainte-Maure, he announces a well-defined *intentio* (his “purpos” [1.5]), a particular *materia* (the “double sorwe of Troilus” in his “aventure” of love [1-3]), a clear *modus tractandi* (“fro wo to wele, and after out of joie” [4]), and a specific *utilitas* for his readers (to help “lovers . . . to pleyne” [11]). His method, as he announces it, will be to “endite” woeful verses (7-8) – to make, that is, a literary composition. His poetry, he indicates, invoking a Horatian principle of decorum, will weep for woe while he, as their author, will *put on* a woeful “chere” to suit his matter. Moreover, at the end of his poem, the narrating “I” confirms his purpose as a *poet* in the “steppes” of the great classical authors.²³ Calling his work a “litel bok” and a “tragedye” (v. 1786), he humbly places it in the tradition of the ancient poets – Virgil, Ovid, Homer, Lucan, Statius. His book, he suggests, must follow *as* “poesye” in the tracks of those illustrious pagan writers who had won lasting fame by recording faithfully, in their “olde clerkis speche,” the ways of the *saeculum*.

Such a program overtly promises the reader or listener an elegant, fixed, final literary order; a careful organization of the poem into well-marked parts or sections, following the model of the classical writers and their medieval translators; and a calculated, stable fit between the teller’s “chere” and the demands of his particular matter. Chaucer no doubt intended, at least at one level, to secure the permanence of his “litel bok” by suggesting its formal participation in a great and abiding literary tradition.²⁴ Four of the poem’s five books are introduced with grandiloquent prologues, and the teller of *Troilus* speaks often of bringing his books and his work to a suitable end. He invokes not one but several mythological agents to develop in himself the precise *chere* appropriate for

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each book and each change in the narrative situation. Tisiphone, Clio, Calliope, the three Furies, Mars are all pressed into the service of shaping the teller's tone and "sentement" as he confronts the poem's and his characters' changing moods and circumstances. "Enditing," the first two stanzas of the prologue to Book I suggest, is, for the writer, an instrument of power, distance, and control.

Yet even as Chaucer, imitating Benoît and the French tradition of the *roman antique*, claims the rhetorical skills and moral wisdom of the classical *auctores*, his prologue articulates another powerful principle of organization. Following Boccaccio, he insists on his own affective interest in his matter. And, like Boccaccio, he invites his public to participate feelingly in Troilus' "cas." But his self-characterization establishes a subjective emphasis different from the Italian poet's. While Boccaccio had made his dominant narrative persona in the *Filostrato* a young lover like Troilo, Chaucer's teller insists on his "unliklynesse" for love. From the start of the prologue, he also emphasizes his immediate, time-bound relationship with his audience. He will, he says, tell the double sorrow of Troilus' love "er that I parte fro ye" (I.5). Yet he avers his fellow-feeling – his sympathy with lovers:

For I, that God of Loves servantz serve,
Ne dar to Love, for my unliklynesse,
Preyen for speed, al sholde I therfore sterve,
So fer am I from his help in derknesse.
But natheles, if this may don gladnesse
Unto any lovere, and his cause availle,
Have he my thonk, and myn be this travaille! (I.15–21)

With a touching humility, he hopes to bring lovers "gladnesse."

But such gladness is identified as much by its absence as its presence through the whole of the prologue. Every line of it, including its long bidding prayer, implies love's essential changeability – its alternating woe and "ese" – in relation to time, passion, and mortality. Though Chaucer's narrator describes his audience as "lovers," his prayer suggests that their experiences of love are varied and subject to change. Those who are at "ese" and "bathen in gladnesse" are asked to recall "passed hevynesse" and to pray for those in Troilus' "cas" that they be brought "in hevne to solas" (I.22–31). The narrator asks prayers too for those who are "despeired in love" and defamed by wicked tongues that they may "soone owt of this world . . . pace" (I.36–42).

Responding to love's fragility and mutability, Chaucer brings his prologue – and his bidding prayer – to a tentative conclusion by invoking a principle not of control but of sympathetic participation. He is bound to his

writing and to his audience, he says, in the last stanza of the prologue to Book I, by "compassioun" (50).²⁵ None of the pagan Latin writers whom Chaucer names at the end of his *Troilus* had ever used the term *compassio* either in describing themselves or in rendering their ancient histories, and indeed the word seems to be entirely post-classical in origin. Early Christian writers had connected compassion with Christ's passion and death as Chaucer's Parson also does in the *Canterbury Tales*, speaking of *misericorde* and its species: "The speses of misericorde been . . . to foryeven and relese, and for to han pitee in herte and *compassioun* of the meschief of his evne-Cristene, and eek to chastise, there as nede is" (x.805-10; my emphasis). Chaucer almost certainly drew the idea for his Christian terminology from Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, where, in the last stanza of Part VIII, the poet asks his readers to have "compassione di Troiolo e di voi insiememente" (compassion for Troiolo and at the same time for yourselves) (33.1-2). In an important sense, the dominant narratorial pose in *Troilus* can be viewed as a detailed, deeply thoughtful response both to Boccaccio's avowedly affective involvement in his story and to his final request to his readers for "compassione."

While Chaucer's narrator puts his *Troilus* forward as the faithful translation of a pagan history, his *compassioun* works pervasively in the poem to shift attention away from pagan, mortal history (and endings) and towards the complex mysterious yearnings of the heart and spirit for stable, *unending* love. Throughout the tale, Chaucer's narrating "I" opens out alternatives to the inevitable conclusion of his ancient tragic history by his practice of compassion. He attends sympathetically to the several fictions his ancient characters develop to circumvent their actual situation. And his "pitee in herte" for the "meschief" or misfortunes of his characters allows him to forgive them their errors and release them, if only through his poetry and only temporarily, from the predetermined story of Troy's fall. Insofar as Chaucer's poem is designed to imitate the "poesye" of the classical writers, it must point, despite its many *ambages*, towards the completion of a tragic history. Yet the English poet's rewriting of that history pervasively questions the terms of pagan closure. Through his ancient characters he develops several "interim" fictions designed to evade or transcend the sad truth of mortal history. His narrating "I" also insists on examining his characters' affections and their souls in relation to his audience's feelings and their lives, still open to time, change, and Christian salvation.

The narrator's (and Chaucer's) *compassioun*, more than any other single quality, distinguishes his poem from others in the tradition of the *roman antique*. His explicit *pitee* for his characters, combined with a delicate

comedic detachment, makes him an exquisitely attentive listener, and what he listens for are the soundings of the ancient pagans' inner consciousness in relation to transient *fole amor*. He waits for and enters feelingly into their conversations and their interior debates, and he attends both to what they say and to what they leave unsaid. In exploring his own and his characters' consciousness and affections, Chaucer follows Boccaccio. But by placing his affective inner perspective explicitly under the rubric of compassion, he articulates a strictly Christian principle of identification with his characters. He will be, as St. Bernard puts it, "merciful to the faults of others just as [he] is towards [his] own."²⁶

It is precisely such identification through compassion that Chaucer practices in his telling as he reduces the distance between his Christian present and the ancient pagan past. Entering sympathetically into his protagonists' intentions, aspirations, successes, and failings, he encounters their souls, and, in the encounter, he recognizes his kinship with them, as if he were their "owne brother dere" (1.51). By including his major characters' competing versions of their life in Troy, Chaucer fully imagines for us the empirical world of the Trojans as each of them attempts to control its fluctuations and slidings in various ways. Through the eyes, feelings, and thought processes of his pagan protagonists, he records several interrelated perspectives and philosophies *as* past and ironically distant from a very different present. At the same time, by means of his compassion, he brings the inner lives of his characters and their experience of their world into the reader or listener's present. In doing so, he reveals complex (and familiar) moments of human consciousness within the context of the difficult, immanently deceptive, changing circumstances dramatized by the narrative.

Scholars have frequently expressed discomfort or irritation or frustration in attempting to categorize Chaucer's elusive teller, the all-important narrative "I" who actively shapes, and equally withdraws from shaping, our experience of *Troilus*. Some have limited him to a single pose, labeling him a "historian" or a naive narrator "dedicated to simplicity" and a "simple view of reality."²⁷ But a larger number have been more troubled. They have variously accused the *Troilus*-narrator of inconsistencies, ironic deviousness, bad reading, blindness, equivocation, and ambivalence.²⁸ Some critics have tried to resolve their discomfort by refusing to separate the narratorial voice from that of the poet and charging Chaucer with uncertainty as to his compositional direction.²⁹ Others have claimed that the poet cannot be found "above or behind the sum total of masks, pretenses, and disguises that constitutes the narrator."³⁰

Whether blame for inconsistency is leveled at the poet or his persona(s),

a just basis for our dilemma in confronting *Troilus's* narratorial voice or voices lies in the poem itself. As James Dean puts it: "The narrator changes just as everything else in the poem changes."³¹ To describe our readerly difficulties in this way is to reach towards understanding the deepest secrets of *Troilus* as a *poem* and as a *roman antique* in Chaucer's radical response to the French and Italian tradition he had inherited. The narrator of *Troilus* changes – or seems to change – partly because he regularly and deliberately turns over narratorial power to his principal characters, each of whom dramatizes his or her own highly individualized, distinctive view of the Trojan matter. Chaucer allows his narrating "I" to give way successively to the inner lives, hopes, and "entente" of Troilus, Pandarus, Criseyde, Diomedes, and Cassandre. Boccaccio, and the authors of the French *romans antiques*, drawing on Ovid's *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses*, had provided models for such sharing of narrative responsibility. But Chaucer greatly extends the power of his characters to determine not only the tale's direction, but also its tonalities, while at the same time withdrawing his own overt presence and control.

All of the pagan characters – except Cassandre – lie to themselves or to others, or to both. Chaucer's narrating "I" not only participates in their lies by dramatizing them; he himself also prevaricates. He claims inexpressibility at key points in the narrative, and he dresses descriptions of passing time and moments of lyric passion in aureate poetic periphrasis as if they belonged to an eternal present. At times he withholds useful historical information – for example, claiming that he cannot report Criseyde's age and straining to disguise the precise length of time it takes for her to give Diomedes her heart.

As the poem moves towards its unavoidable conclusion, however, harsh truths about history and treachery can no longer be glossed over or transformed by language. After Troilus has seen and recognized the brooch on Diomedes's cloak, he cannot sustain his hopes or his illusions. Nor can the narrator, who swiftly summarizes the facts:

Gret was the sorwe and pleynte of Troilus.
 But forth hire cours Fortune ay gan to holde.
 Criseyde loveth the sone of Tideus,
 And Troilus moot wepe in cares colde.
 Swich is this world, whoso it kan byholde;
 In ech estat is litel hertes reste.
 God leve us for to take it for the beste! (v.1744–50)

Yet the narrator's very prayer to God, that he and his public may take the world "for the beste," leads him back to poetry. Even at his story's tragic

end, he embraces once more the kind of persuasive rhetoric that had, from the beginning, characterized his compassionate telling of Troilus' woe in love. And the prayer enables him to save his hero. In an act of poetic grace, he translates Troilus after his death to the "holughnesse of the eighthe sphere."

THE TEXT OF "MYN AUCTOUR . . . LOLLIUS" AND THE
"FORME OF OLDE CLERKIS SPECHE/IN POETRIE"

As everyone knows, the principal material basis for Chaucer's *Troilus* is Boccaccio's "special" treatment of the matter of Troy – his narrowly focused anatomy of Troilo's foolish love and false Criseida's betrayal of him.³² Yet Chaucer recontextualizes the *Filostrato's* matter within a larger, much more intricate account of the Trojan world at war. And this recontextualization he attributes not to himself but to "myn auctour called Lollius" (I.394). In assuming the narratorial pose of a faithful translator, he follows Benoît de Sainte-Maure and the French tradition of the *roman antique*. "As myn auctour seyde, so sey I" (II.18), Chaucer claims. Just so, Benoît had declared in his *Roman de Troie*, "Le latin sivrâ e la letre,/ Nule autre rien n'i voudrai metre,/ S'ensi non com jol truis escrit" (I will follow the Latin and the writing, nor do I want to put anything else there except what I find written) (139–41). Benoît, however, was following known Latin authors – Dares and Dictys – and a known text. Though he did not shrink from embellishing his sources, he drew the outline for his narrative from two well-known school authors. Chaucer, by contrast, only pretended to have a Latin source, naming his *auctour* Lollius even as he used Boccaccio's Italian *Filostrato* as the principal source for his poem.³³

Yet the pretense is no mere fraud. It allows Chaucer to invent a precise simulacrum of the kind of narrative which, in his view, a secular pagan poet, would *have had* to write about Troy and Troilus if he were to be true to his subject. As such, it offered Chaucer the opportunity to create an "ancient" account of Troy's fall – to make a "book" *like* those of Virgil, Ovid, Statius, Homer, and Lucan. The whole of *Troilus and Criseyde*, save its Christian epilogue, is put forward as just this sort of authoritative ancient text, artfully shaped and retold, but not essentially changed, by a modern writer. At many points in the narrative the English poet invites us to study his poem *as if it were* a translation of Lollius, explicitly reminding us to consider the ancient author's matter and *sentence*.

To find the *matere* for his "romaunce" of Lollius – his capacious, latter-day *roman antique* – Chaucer turned both to the classical poets and to medieval treatments of Troy's matter.³⁴ At the same time, he also invented

a good deal of his “Lollius”³⁵ in such a way as to rewrite the *matere* of Troy in a powerfully unsettling new way. By means of Lollius, Chaucer locates his audience *in medias res*, as Benoît de Sainte-Maure had also done in his elaborate adaptation of Dares’ eye-witness perspective. Chaucer, however, dramatizes quotidian Trojan life in a far more concentrated way than Benoît had in order to illustrate the multiple (ultimately bottomless) layers of deception, witting and unwitting, that characterize pagan courtly conduct and belief under the shadow of war.

As I have already pointed out, each of the medieval writers to whom Chaucer turned in developing Lollius’ (i.e., his own) account had proposed to tell the truth about Troy’s fall, though this truth differed from writer to writer. As we saw in chapter 1, Benoît de Sainte-Maure had imagined for his audience the “true” circumstantial history of ancient daily life. But his clerkly narrator had also regularly explicated for his listeners the full ethical meaning of Troy’s fall, attaching the fall to academic lessons about Fortune, Destiny, foolish love, and the transiency of the mortal world. For Joseph of Exeter in his *Bellum Troianum*, the truth about the fall of Troy had to do with “successful wrongdoing . . . happy in the fulfillment of wretched desire.”³⁶ The Troy he describes contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction. At the very end of the war, Priam, though an old man, remains a noble warrior.³⁷ Yet his courage and, implicitly, his commitment to truth are undermined by the “suspicious inconstancy of Antenor and Aeneas.” In this situation, Priam prepares “to dislodge treachery with treachery and to banish deceit with deceit.”³⁸ The Trojan world just before it falls is, as Joseph puts it, one in which “everything [is] cloaked in secrecy, nothing [is] out in the open.”³⁹ In Joseph’s account, Troy *makes* itself subject to the Fates and the turning of Fortune’s wheel because, blinded by human pride and error, its citizens do not understand their inevitable proneness to chance and Fortune.⁴⁰

When Chaucer takes up the matter of Troy, he draws on both Benoît and Joseph. His conception of the truth about the fall includes their clerkly moral interpretations about transiency, pride, treachery, and folly, but also goes beyond them. By isolating one “biography,” he is able, like Boccaccio, to defer large historical questions of causality, of political beginnings and endings, of the moral and existential truth about Trojan society. Yet, unlike the Italian poet, he pervasively implicates just these questions in his narrative. While foregrounding a secret love affair, he also probes the domestic life of Trojan high society in order to show, rather than moralize about, the web of deceptions that binds it ever more tightly to its sad fate. As the ancient text of Lollius composes for us the daily comings and goings of the Trojans – their habits of worship, their dinner parties, their friendly visits to one another, their political concerns – we

may scarcely notice the accumulation of willed and unwilled ignorance and deception of various kinds, especially within the extended Trojan royal family. Yet if we pause to analyze the many scenes of life in Troy, dramatized rather than merely narrated, we see that Chaucer has shaped his Lollian matter to articulate the essential fragility of Trojan (and all secular) "sikernesse."⁴¹

To illustrate my point, I want to look at two scenes in which Chaucer rewrites or creates *ab ovo* his "ancient" *matere*. Close analysis reveals how Lollius' text, as it is invented by Chaucer, is designed to draw us, almost unaware, into the delicate fabric of seeming *sikernesse* ever undercut by misapprehension, misplaced trust, deception, and changing circumstances. Chaucer's dreamer in the *House of Fame* puts very well the problem we face in reading the Lollian world turned into poetry by Chaucer: "Allas! what harm doth apparence,/ Whan hit is fals in existence!" (*HF*, I.265–66).⁴² In the first of the two scenes, Chaucer prepares for Troilus' first glimpse of Criseyde in the temple of Pallas on a great feast in her honor (I.148–68). He follows the Italian in almost every particular. Yet slight changes point to the English poet's interest in locating, but not commenting on, ominous signs even in the most apparently tranquil, optimistic, and usual of Trojan situations.

I choose this case as my first example because it illustrates Chaucer's conception not so much of individual culpability as of a fundamental, unavoidable instability in the ancient world (and, by extension, the fallen mortal world generally).⁴³ The world the Trojans inhabit is, in the poet's argument and Lollius' "ancient" text, ontologically unreliable and changeable – ever subject to time and Fortune's whims – before individuals are. Yet individuals, for one reason or another, can and do collaborate in this unavoidable, immanent treachery by their own actions and by the force of their earthly loves. This is a theme that dominates Joseph of Exeter's *Bellum Troianum* and hovers over Benoit's *Troie*. Chaucer, however, dramatizes in an especially discomfiting way the difficulties the ancient pagans (and also his audience) may have in reading and accepting their true, *essentially* unstable situation as human beings in the mortal world.

Whereas Boccaccio had devoted two stanzas to introducing the Trojans' springtime preparations for the festival of the Palladium, Chaucer expands the preparations to three. His description of the spring setting emphasizes even more than the Italian poet's the promise of a new beginning and the excitement of the young Trojans, dressed "al in hir beste wise" for the festival:

And so bifel, whan comen was the tyme
Of Aperil, whan clothed is the mede

Chaucer and the *roman antique*

With newe grene, of lusty Veer the pryme,
And swote smellen floures white and rede,
In sondry wises shewed, as I rede,
The folk of Troie hire observaunces olde,
Palladiones feste for to holde. (1.155-61)

It is not merely spring, as Boccaccio has it, but April “whan clothed is the mede/ With *newe* grene, of lusty Veer the *pryme*.” The leisurely, detailed, concrete description and the formal completeness and finality of the rhyme-royal stanza give a remarkable impression of custom, order, and hope in a fresh beginning.⁴⁴

In addition, in all three stanzas, the Palladium – the ancient statue given to the Trojans by Pallas while they were building her a temple – figures centrally.⁴⁵ In the first of the stanzas, the statue is described as the object in which the Trojans have placed their trust *above every other*:

But aldirmost in honour, out of doute,
Thei hadde a relik, heet Palladion,
That was hire trist aboven everichon.
(152-54; my emphasis)

These lines translate Boccaccio’s rather exactly (*Fil.*, 1.18.5-8), but there are slight differences which only become remarkable once we have experienced the whole unsettling texture of Lollius’ matter. Chaucer identifies the Palladium as a “relik,” and he also suggests, borrowing from Benoît de Sainte-Maure, that the Trojans have put their trust in it above every other sign of sacred protection. As Benoît says, “C’est lor refuiz e toz lor biens” (25408).

In Chaucer’s Lollian scene, the Trojans have no misgivings either about the apparent promise of the new season or about their relic as the sign *par excellence* of their unfailing safety. Yet, just as the spring will pass, the Palladium will be the instrument of Trojan betrayal. Antenor and Aeneas, in the interest of achieving peace, will eventually help the Greeks to steal it, thereby removing the Trojans’ last hope of security. The very relic believed to ensure stability will be the one ultimately fatal to Troy. Boccaccio’s narrator explicitly suggests this connection by calling the Palladium “Palladio fatale.” By contrast, Chaucer, who clearly recognizes the same ominous situation, prefers to let the Palladium remain “innocent” in this scene. Though it will ultimately be an instrument of treachery, at this moment it is a benign and comforting sign in the midst of a spring beginning. At this point in the narrative, the Trojans cannot possibly know of their future betrayal, cannot know that the surest sign of “trouth” and “trist” in their world – a divine gift – will ultimately prove impotent as a

protection. The "lusty" knights, "fressh" ladies, and "bright" maidens who gather "bothe for the seson and the feste" (I. 165-68), little suspect that both will fail their best hopes.

From moment to moment in his poem, by muting narratorial commentary, as he does in the scene we have just examined, Chaucer allows the pagans (and his audience) the comfort of their faith in treacherous signs of several kinds. The English poet uses the formality of his rhyme-royal stanza to linger over their festivals, their parties, the bliss of the lovers. Of his narrator's twelve explicit comments on fortune in the poem, half are reserved for the last book. The result of this narratorial withdrawal is to foreground Lollius' Trojan society in all its density and unresolved, "poetic" confusions of truth and falsehood.

The next scene I want to examine is one entirely invented by Chaucer and added to his Italian source. In analyzing it, we must bear in mind that, although the matter involves one of Pandarus' fabrications, it belongs in the first instance to Chaucer's Lollius, put forward as part of his ancient text. The event is Deiphebus' family party, initiated by Pandarus as a ruse in order to bring Troilus and Criseyde together for the first time.⁴⁶ The account of the party, bridging Books II and III in a neatly symmetrical way (slightly less than four hundred lines at the end of Book II, slightly more than four hundred lines at the beginning of Book III), effectively blurs the boundaries that ought to mark the end of one book, the beginning of another.

The family party begins near the end of Book II as an idea newly conceived in Pandarus' mind. He promises Troilus to find a "siker place" where he may reveal his "wo" to Criseyde and win her "routhe" (II. 1369-72). Paradoxically, however, in order to create a secure place for the lovers, Pandarus must work a series of treacheries which may seem minor or playful, but which involve the most unsavory and unethical of exploitations.⁴⁷ Deiphebus' house itself, with its warm "litel chaumbre" where the "sick" Troilus receives Criseyde, seems to be a haven of peace and comfort, a protection against the trauma of war. But when we study Pandarus' fabrications and the Trojans' participation in them as *Lollius' text presents them*, we cannot easily avoid a sense of discomfort. A family house, the safest and most protective of places, becomes in Pandarus' manipulations of it for his "ende" a stage for enacting lies, both recognized and unrecognized. Moreover, by the way the text presents the entire event of the dinner party, we as readers are drawn willy-nilly into the midst of the actual Trojan situation with its unacknowledged web of deceptions. We are given unmarked signs pointing to the treacherous beginning and equally

treacherous end of the war. But neither the narrator nor his Lollius provides us with explicit moral commentary by which to interpret the intricate interweaving of Pandaric lies and other betrayals immanent in the ancient matter.

As Pandarus sets about inventing a pretext for Deiphebus' party, he selects his "special" *matere* from the actual matter of Troy. Into a close circle of friendship and goodwill in Trojan high society Pandarus introduces his verisimilar lie concerning a plot against Criseyde. According to Pandarus, a certain Trojan, Polifete, unjustly threatens to take Criseyde's possessions. Although we know that Pandarus has made the story about Polifete up, we also recognize that his lie offers a reasonable facsimile of the real, litigious situation in Troy. Neither Criseyde nor any member of the royal family doubts for a moment that Pandarus' story is true. Deiphebus is so moved by it that he not only agrees to have the party but adds to the guest list and goes himself to Criseyde's house to invite her. In thus making up a verisimilar story – a tale so *like* the actual history of Troy that it is credible – Pandarus mirrors and comments on Chaucer's own art of narrative fiction.

Already, in the actions preceding the party, we observe that the adulterous Helen has been fully accepted by the Trojans as Paris' "wife"; that Pandarus, who has already been revealed to us as a great schemer, is loved and respected in the highest circles; and that the beautiful Criseyde is championed by the royal brothers though her father is a traitor to the city. As the plans for the party lead to the party itself, the narrator tells us that "*queene* Eleyne" who "*nolde feyne*" to Deiphebus, comes as "his suster, homly" to the dinner (1555–61; my emphasis).⁴⁸ Economically implicated in this description of the first guest's arrival are reminders of Helen's treachery *as* a queen to her legitimate husband, Menelaus (the epithet *queene* in relation to Helen appears five times in the long scene spanning Books II and III); her comfortable, but actually illegitimate "sisterly" relationship with her "brother-in-law"; and her apparent habit of truth-telling in her new family.

The text makes no overt effort to explicate the history of treachery that marks the story of Troy's destruction from its beginning with Paris' theft of Helen and Helen's betrayal of Menelaus. Yet the very presence of Helen the *queen* at the party almost imperceptibly suggests the fragility, the partiality, of truth and troth within the Trojan situation as Lollius dramatizes it and Pandarus manipulates it. In the same scene, Criseyde mentions Antenor and Aeneas as Polifete's friends, and this glancing note foreshadows the war's end in Trojan civil treachery. As Chaucer conflates Pandarus' feigned *plete* and Deiphebus' party, he, like Benoît, draws us into

the inner, daily life of the noble Trojans *in the midst of the war*. Unlike Benoît, however, he offers relatively little framing commentary. He requires us to experience the endless treacheries, major and minor, political and personal, that characterize even the most apparently innocent and kindly of situations within the highest circles of Trojan society. We, like the noblest of the Trojans, may prefer not to attend to the small treacheries, the war, the inevitable processes of change. The poetry encourages us to defer acknowledgment of them, to allow both the Trojans and ourselves lyrical, "cozy" moments of *sikernesne* in the poem as we locate ourselves within its intricate *collectio* of metaphoric and literal places. But, as we realize in retrospective readings of *Troilus*, no such moments, no such "places," actually present themselves. In *every* situation, *every* scene, *every* stanza, and in the form of the poem as a whole, discordant or subversive elements belie the possibility of perfectly innocent, unadulterated bliss or permanently *siker* places or the unequivocal truth about the Trojan matter.

The truth about Troy, according to Chaucer's Lollian text, is that there are, and can be, no moments of unequivocal stability *in* the pagan (i.e., secular) world any more than there can be a single, stable, perfectly formed, "final" book *about* the matter of Troy. As an "ancient" mirror of both Trojan deception and worldly mutability, Lollius' (and Chaucer's) *Book of Troilus* trafficks in lies, as well as the subject of lies, at every level of its being. The text Chaucer invents and attributes to Lollius is as much about mutability and the immanent mendacity of the secular mortal world as it is about love. It is also about the concomitant mendacity of the ancient (and modern) poems that record, and therefore necessarily follow after, the ways of the *saeculum*.⁴⁹

To be sure, Chaucer makes *eros* a central concern in his poem, but the questions the text raises about erotic desire have to do with all earthly attachments in relation to the world's treacheries. What is it, the Lollian text asks, that we human beings love when we love? And how can we trust the stability of our loves against the constant presence of time, changing circumstances, war, betrayal, and destruction – all of them signs of that mortal transiency that lies at the core of Lollius' matter of Troy? Each of the major characters in *Troilus* – Pandarus, Troilus, Cassandre, Criseyde, Calkas, Diomedes, and the narrator – must respond to the *same* circumstances, the *same* Lollian matter of Troy, which is to say, the matter of worldly mutability and mendacity. As we shall see in examining each of Chaucer's major characters in turn, none of them can fully control the matter of Troy or give it a final form though each of them attempts to do so in his or her own way. None of the pagan attitudes towards love and mutability in the poem is unreasonable or absurd, though some are patently more noble –

more spiritual – than others. And all of them explicitly invite comparison with each other as the characters attempt to impose their views on one another in the world of the text.

Perhaps the most egregious of the lies Chaucer's Lollian *Book of Troilus* perpetrates has to do with the claims the narrating "I" makes or implies about his vernacular "translation." The poem is explicitly put forward as a finished work with a clear beginning, an end, a special purpose, and five discrete, self-contained books on which we can count to moor ourselves so as to grasp the full import, the truth, about the matter of Troy and Troilus. Yet Chaucer the poet denies us even the stability of his "litel bok" as a *collectio* of reliable, formally complete, unambiguous signs. The beginning of the poem concerns its end while its endings are multiple. The very *last* stanza of the epilogue celebrates the divine Trinity as the uncircumscribed source of a transcendent *beginning* without end for humankind. Moreover, unlike the *parti* of Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, which demarcate distinct upward and downward movements in Troilo's amorous biography, the individual books of Chaucer's *Troilus* systematically begin with endings and end with beginnings. The apparent form of each book – the expected movement from a beginning to an end – as well as the form of the whole poem yield before Lollius' shifting matter. In spite of the narrator's elaborate proems to the first four books, he finds that he can only follow after an ever-surprising confusion and conflation of beginnings as endings, endings as beginnings at every level of the narrative.

PANDARUS' ROMANCE

If Lollius and his text represent Chaucer's idea of the *roman antique* as the translation of a densely circumstantial, authentic account of pagan (and secular) life, another key "author" in *Troilus* actively reworks the Lollian matter to accommodate an Ovidian and Epicurean vision of the world and secular history. Pandarus, the go-between and *doctor amoris* Chaucer had inherited from Boccaccio, energetically seeks to overwrite and thereby evade, "for the nones," the sad truths about change in mortal history (Lollius' matter) by constructing amoral, playful fictions of erotic desire. He figures forth the artist busily and skillfully making his essentially mendacious *finzione* for the sake of a hidden but frequently invoked *entent* in view of his narrowly defined *matere*.⁵⁰ Not even Chaucer's narrator, who analyzes his role as a teller over and over, can match Pandarus in his calculated manipulations of form and matter, though the two characters obviously bear comparison with each other as authors. Above all, Pandarus

succeeds in his work, persuades his intended listeners within the poem, by pursuing a self-conscious art of subterfuge and fabulation.

To be sure, Pandarus' success is temporary. The pressure of mortal history – the *actual* (Lollian) matter of Troy – finally reveals his illusion-making and his interest in pleasure for what they are. The limits of his art can be measured by the facts that dominate Book v. Yet his distinctive form of “ancient” romance, as we observe it in the process of becoming, fascinates and beguiles. Pandarus creates and manipulates literary form, not to discover or record the truth about the matter of Troy, but for the sake of “solas.” From a philosophical point of view, he systematically seeks “joye and gladnesse” as the “sovereyn good.” Like the Epicureans of Boethius' *Consolatio*, Pandarus thinks it “a ryght blisful thyng to plowngen [himself and others] in voluptuous delyt.”⁵¹ At every turn, his commitment to delight determines his particular, carefully defined transformations of the matter of Troy. In an analytic way, Pandarus outlines for readers (though not for Criseyde) each stage in his art of Ovidian *fine amor*. Underlying this revelation is Chaucer's deep interest in the power of certain kinds of poetry to lead readers into the play of worldly (and specifically erotic, sexual) pleasure. Within the pagan world as it is dramatized by Lollius, Pandarus' urge to escape the painful conditions of transitory human life is not unlaudable, though his means are questionable. He sees as clearly as any character in the poem how fully subject humans are to Fortune's whims, to time, to unwanted change, to loss, and to death. Challenging the actual condition of things, he seeks always to deflect or mask the unavoidable blows of woeful “hap” through falsifying manipulations of many kinds.

The matere: “The oghte not to clepe it hap, but grace”⁵²

In examining Pandarus' art of rhetorical manipulation, we must first consider his specific matter as he and the narrator of *Troilus* rigorously limit it at every stage of his “romance.” The strength and brilliance of Chaucer's poem as a whole depends on the delicate intertwining of various perspectives, various attitudes towards and interpretations of the *matere* of Troy and Troilus. In order to understand how and why we as readers are drawn into the matter in different ways at different moments in the poem, and why we are often made to feel disoriented in our reading, we must isolate each treatment of the history in an analytic way. Pandarus' (and the poem's) first reference to his special *matere* appears little more than a hundred lines from the end of Book I. As Pandarus, having learned the identity of Troilus' new love, is about to leave him, he aims to give the

young lover a sense of hope, to transform, in effect, his fear of doom into a new beginning. In doing so, he reveals *his* response to, and method of handling, the larger Lollian matter of Troy (which is, as we have seen, also the matter of mutability in the mortal world).

After analyzing the various kinds of love, “celestial” and natural, in which men and women are involved willy-nilly, Pandarus explicitly (though somewhat periphrastically) names his “matere”: “Forthy *som grace* I hope in hire to fynde” (1.980; my emphasis). While the phrase “som grace” is an ambiguous one, Pandarus hastens to give it specificity in the next stanza (though its very ambiguity will serve his rhetorical purposes in other contexts). “[I]t sate hire wel right nowthe/ A worthi knyght to loven and cherice,/ And but she do, I holde it for a vice” (1.985–87). At the very outset, Pandarus conceives his matter strictly and narrowly as the “grace” of sexual pleasure that Criseyde will give. He intends, as he says, to make Criseyde love Troilus as a lady loves her knight. Secondly, he intends that this kind of love should occur “right nowthe,” without any unnecessary delay. Pandarus here uses the word “grace” – with its connotations of a generous, capacious, unrestricted gift – in its secular erotic sense.⁵³ At the same time, he insists on haste, on the importance of seizing the moment in the matter of grace, and this motif is intimately and pervasively tied to his strictly limited definition of his *matere*.

In Pandarus’ shaping of his matter through the next two books of *Troilus* (and the narrator’s sly collusion with him), he never veers from his initial definition of it. Introducing his *matere* at the conclusion to Book 1, he not only stirs hope in Troilus by promising him “som grace” but also transforms what is formally the end of a book into a beginning. The narrator, who had paradoxically begun Book 1 by explaining the *end* of Troilus’ *aventure* in betrayal, has been effectively displaced by a pagan character within the text who, as a creator of literary form, is insistently committed to beginnings. That Chaucer intended precisely this paradoxical situation in formulating not only Book 1 but the poem as a whole is suggested by the ways in which he altered his source. Boccaccio had concluded *Parte 1* of his *Filostrato* with a downward movement insistently focused on Troilo’s sense of his own impotence and impending death. The second *parte* of the poem, then, opens with the beginning of Pandaro’s hope-filled but ultimately treacherous machinations. As I argued in chapter 4, each part of the *Filostrato* details a distinct stage in the anatomy of love. Chaucer, by contrast, deliberately conflates beginnings with ends and ends with beginnings, whether of his books or his matter. As Book 1 moves to its end, Pandarus *begins* contemplating the first, mental stage necessary for composing his erotic romance. He “went his wey,” we are told, “thenkyng

on this matere,/ And how he best myghte hire biseche of grace,/ And fynde
a tyme therto, and a place" (I.1062-64).⁵⁴

In Pandarus' management of his particular matter through the next two books of *Troilus* he never loses the thread of his argument. He is ever concerned with manipulating actual time, place, and the desires of others for the sake of sexual grace. He does, however, color his matter in various ways, depending on his audience. The project initiated as an idea at the end of Book I takes form in Book II as Pandarus, arriving at Criseyde's house, begins wooing his niece for Troilus' sake. After a playful "prologue" designed to whet Criseyde's appetite for pleasure, he begins the construction of his story by describing to his niece his *matere* as a "goodly aventure" and a "good aventure." And he counsels her to "cache it anon, lest aventure slake" (II.281, 288, 291). Then he explains what the *aventure* involves. The king's son, Troilus, loves her and he will die unless she grants him her "routhe" (II.349). At this point "routhe" becomes synonymous with "grace." The two words for the same sexual favor are, in Pandarus's treatment of them, virtually interchangeable.

The art: "So like a sooth at prime face"

In order to achieve his "ende" – to give form to his special *matere* in *Troilus* – Pandarus must appropriate not only Criseyde's body but also parts of the actual, historical matter of Troy. What that raw, "uninvented" matter is Pandarus knows full well. It includes the day-to-day events of Trojan life in the midst of war (Lollius' ancient text) and the prior history of Thebes with its devastating civil war (the matter of the *Thebaid*, the *Roman de Thèbes*, and Cassandre's "olde stories"). It also encompasses classical, philosophical views about Fortune and her wiles, the affections of the ruling family of Troy, the houses of the city as literal architectural structures, the seasons, the weather, diurnal time, and the *cas* of Troilus' sudden, overwhelming love. All of these materials Pandarus rightly recognizes as the necessary basis for his highly selective and playful kind of "translation" – a kind that involves rhetorical as well as sexual manipulation.

At the beginning of Book II of *Troilus*, Pandarus sets about persuading Criseyde to read his "text", beginning with a long prologue occupying thirty-four stanzas, 238 lines. By means of rhetoric and by actual physical contact with Criseyde – a *literal* "seizing" of good will – the "love poet" skillfully draws his "audience," who is his niece and also a basic component of his *matere* of pleasure, away from her serious reading. She must set aside her *romance* of Thebes as well as the "holy seyntes lyves" which she lightly mentions as appropriate for widows. Above all, Pandarus lures Criseyde by

his tantalizing suggestion that he "koude . . . telle a thyng to doon yow pleye" (121). Criseyde asks her uncle whether his tale is of the war's end, which would also mark the easing of a realistic well-placed terror for her. Pandarus can bring no such actual relief from history and fact. Yet, as he argues, his "thing" will give five times the pleasure of real liberation from his niece's justifiable anxiety. The lure of Pandarus' narrowly defined *matere* – that is, pleasure – draws Criseyde into his trap. By line 127 of Pandarus' prologue, she is fully engaged by her uncle's riddle – the "thyng" or subject of the tale he dangles before her. But Pandarus, who delights in deferring the promised pleasure as part of his calculated process of entrapment, refuses satisfaction. He presents his niece instead with "many wordes glade,/ . . . frendly tales, and . . . merie chiere" (II.148–49) which, like the digressions that figure in many a medieval romance, whet Criseyde's (and the reader's) desire for understanding and closure.

At last, however, Pandarus responds to his niece's interest by identifying, for the first time, the subject of his tale, his news, his "thyng." What he offers Criseyde is a "faire . . . aventure." The word "aventure," to which Chaucer returns again and again in his writing, plays a major role in *Troilus* and the *Knight's Tale*.⁵⁵ In both of his experiments in the form of the *roman antique*, the English poet uses the term in relation to the workings of Fortune, on one hand, and to Ovidian adventures of illicit love, on the other. For Pandarus, "aventure" in both senses, though more insistently in the latter sense as *good* or *fair* adventure, is of the essence of his literary design. When he first names his narrative scheme as an "aventure," Criseyde responds by begging her uncle to "sey . . . what yow liste" (249). As if to underscore the partially achieved collusion between Criseyde and the newly defined form of *aventure*, Pandarus kisses his niece in a characteristic appropriation of her body.

If Pandarus manipulates Criseyde for the sake of leading her into sexual pleasure, he also plays with history, serious academic philosophy, actual time, and literal, architectural space to achieve his end. Pandarus is well-schooled in the political fortune of Thebes and the events of the Trojan War. He also knows and uses Boethian and Senecan philosophy concerning Fortune's wiles. And he is expert in astrological prognostication. But these serious matters of fact and received wisdom about the world's ways are, for him, merely *topoi* to be drawn into the furthering of his romance. The designing uncle's skillful appropriation of serious materials inherited from the tradition of the *roman antique* and the medieval arts curriculum dramatically illustrates how his romance of Troilus differs from other versions of the Trojan matter in the poem.

One striking example of this appropriation is to be found in Book II as

Chaucer creates two successive, nearly identical window-scenes – two moments when Criseyde sees Troilus riding past her house. In the first of these, the event is, as Jill Mann has emphasized, explicitly a matter of chance – a part, therefore, of the matter of Lollius.⁵⁶ Troilus, fresh from a successful battle, rides with “al his folk anoon” in triumph towards his palace. Criseyde, who is alone at her window, reflecting on Pandarus’ “thyng,” his news, cannot help but be struck by her would-be lover’s magnificence. He is richly armed, and his horse is bleeding. In sum, he is, as the narrating “I” puts it, “a knyghtly sighte.” In this case, as Criseyde blushes at her newly felt emotion, erotic attraction is shown to follow from the actual, historical adventures of Lollian history and to depend upon them for its unfolding. The first window-scene, as part of the narrator’s Lollian matter, defines a serious kind of “pagan” narrative, one that acknowledges the primacy of time, chance, change, and history in the making of responsible, moral poetry and the shaping of mortal life. The act of falling in love participates in, and is subject to, larger patterns of *aventure*, and especially the great, unalterable schemes of time and Fortune in the world.

But Chaucer’s Pandarus does not rest content with a single window scene. He arranges a second, highly artificial version of the same event. He will go to Criseyde’s house, he tells Troilus, and bring Criseyde to sit at her window. At the appointed moment, then, the young lover will ride past the house, *as if* by chance. The purpose of this *mise en scene* is to intensify Criseyde’s admiration and it has precisely the effect intended by her uncle. She blushes (as she had also done in the narrator’s Lollian version) and Troilus salutes her, nodding at the same time to Pandarus (II. 1256–60). By means of artful design and the manipulation of imagination and feeling in others, Pandarus *shapes* history in a calculated effort to evade the constraints and woes of quotidian life. He intends to create only “*good adventures*” in which he and his subjects may, as far as possible, escape suffering and enjoy pleasure.

Pandarus’ philosophizing, like his historiography, serves worldly pleasure. He is well schooled in Boethius’ teaching on Fortune, the maxims of Senecan Stoicism, and Ovid’s remedies for love. He uses his learning, however, and his literary knowledge not to confront the truth about the world’s ways, but rather, “for the nones,” to bring Troilus as much pleasure as he can. When, in Book IV, for example, Troilus laments over Criseyde’s imminent departure from Troy, Pandarus comforts his friend with a disquisition, invented by Chaucer, on the nature of life and love as matters of chance. Fortune’s gifts, both good and bad, are common to every “wight” and Fortune is not to be trusted. Moreover, since all love is

"but casuel plesaunce,/ Som cas shal putte it out of remembraunce" (IV.419-20). On the basis of this theory about chance in pleasure and change in love, Pandarus encourages Troilus, as Ovid would, to replace old affection with new. The goal of his instruction is a simple one: "to don [Troilus] wo to falle" (430), to return him, that is, to a state of (worldly) pleasure. By collating philosophical fragments from several sources, he aspires to control the power of woe, of bad fortune, of history and time for his friend. As everyone knows, his effort is ultimately futile and he is finally reduced to silence. His formulation of Troilus' *aventure*, based as it is on lies about the world and intentional distortions of the truth about life, collapses under the pressure of history and the outcome of Chaucer's larger *roman antique*.

We cannot leave the subject of Pandarus' manipulations of his raw (Lollian) material without attending to his transformations of actual time and architectural structures. With regard to time, the wily uncle habitually appropriates the movements of the seasons and the weather for his artistic design. Like everything else in the world he inhabits, they are significant only insofar as they can be pressed into the service of pleasure. As I have already suggested, Pandarus' theory of pleasure is intimately tied to his notion that "moments" must always be seized. In practical terms, this notion involves working with reasonable haste towards the achievement of pleasurable moments whenever and however such moments can be wrested from the flow of time and the processes of history. To do this one must know how to take full advantage of the seasons as they pass and the weather as it changes.

Pandarus' explicit manipulation of time first appears in his management of the spring topos in Book II as he initiates his particular form of romance. The description of spring was a commonplace used by Benoît de Sainte-Maure and many other poets to signal the beginning of a love affair. In *Troilus*, Book II proper begins with the month of May, when Pandarus, remembering his "erand" on Troilus' behalf and "ek his grete emprise" (II.72-73), prepares to visit his niece, Criseyde. The apparent coincidence of May with Pandarus' mission is not, however, a coincidence but part of a calculated artistic *conjointure* on Pandarus' (and Chaucer's) part. Pandarus has bided his time in his art of seizing the moment. In doing this he follows Ovid's advice in the *Ars amatoria*,⁵⁷ but he also responds to his own programmatic need to manage actual seasonal and diurnal time purposefully in the interest of pleasure. Everyone in the poet's audience would have known that May is the appropriate month in which to begin a literary adventure of love. But Pandarus studies more deeply. Before he sets out for Criseyde's *palays*, he makes astrological calculations to determine whether

Chaucer's *Book of Troilus and Criseyde*

the moon – that most changeable of constellations, intimately associated with the goddess Fortuna – is “in good plit” to support his journey on behalf of Troilus: he “caste and knew in good plit was the moone/ To doon viage” and so he “took his way ful soone/ Unto his neces palays ther biside” (II.74–76).

Pandarus also attends to changes in the weather for the sake of his “ende.” As he prepares for Troilus and Criseyde’s fateful first night of love, for example, his dominant concern is to find a “tyme” for the encounter. The evening he chooses is carefully calculated with regard to the phase of the moon and the weather forecast:

But Pandare up and, shortly for to seyne,
Right sone upon the chaungynge of the moone,
Whan lightles is the world a nyght or tweyne,
And that the wolken shop hym for to reyne,
He streght o morwe unto his nece wente. (III.548–52)

No more suitable context for a secret love-affair could be imagined than a dark, rainy night, and, in the event, Pandarus’ astrological calculations prove correct:

The bente moone with hire hornes pale,
Saturne, and Jove, in Cancro joyned were,
That swych a reyn from heven gan avale
That every maner womman that was there
Hadde of that smoky reyn a verray feere. (III.624–28)

In Boccaccio’s *Filostrato*, the night when the lovers first sleep together is simply “oscura e tenebrosa” and has nothing to do with Pandaro’s calculations. Chaucer, by contrast, shows his Pandarus “seizing the moment” in a literal way by means of careful prognostication.

If Pandarus is an expert manager of moments, a manipulator of the seasons and the weather, he also skillfully appropriates the fixed, domestic architectural spaces of (medievalized) Troy for the sake of his “ende.” Not only Deiphebus’ house but his own become, in a detailed way, the “places” of love for Troilus and Criseyde. Pandarus counts on the lovers to invest the small, warm, literal spaces in which he locates the major events of the affair with a cosmic, infinitely spacious grandeur suited to Ovidian *fine amor*. Ever the Epicurean materialist, he understands full well that he is playing with the actual “tymbur” of Trojan houses as he orchestrates the lovers’ meetings.

The best-known and most important of Pandarus’ arrangements is the one he devises in his own “litel closet yonder” – a room containing a fireplace and a bed, which is to be the locus for his niece’s first night of love

with Troilus. In the most concrete terms he manipulates the spaces of his house in the interest of secret "delyt."⁵⁸ No comparable arrangements appear in Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, and it is clear from Chaucer's meticulous rewriting that, for him, Pandarus' art includes the temporary poetic transformation of literal, "historical" spaces into the imaginative places of love in his *aventure* of Troilus and Criseyde.⁵⁹ These spaces, literally presented, are straitened and pedestrian. Yet, as they enter Pandarus' fiction, they assume a grand metaphoric character. The heightened language surrounding the lovers' moment of sexual union provisionally transforms the small, confined physical space of Pandarus' borrowed bedroom. Through his carefully calculated poetics of erotic desire, his small chamber becomes a boundless heaven of delight – if only for discrete, limited moments in the narrative. By his art of rhetorical troping, the painful Lollian matter of Troy is displaced, if only temporarily, by the Pandaric *matere* of sexual grace.

TROILUS' ROMANCE IN TROY

Chaucer's Troilus is a principal reader of Pandarus' romance, and he is drawn by desire into the highly artificial form his pandering friend creates, sometimes by forceful means. When, in Book 1, no other device will capture Troilus as his audience, Pandarus shouts to his friend, "Awake" (1.729). But Troilus is also the maker of his own form of *aventure* in the poem. Despite his collusion with Pandarus, he maintains a distinctively spiritual, lyrical narrative of love, even in the face of disheartening fact. Troilus' story as *he* experiences it, filtered through the moods of a youthful first love, is in many respects traditional. But, by giving his hero's vision of his love a novel turn and juxtaposing it with other versions of the Trojan *matere*, Chaucer greatly deepens the questions about love and life raised by his poem. Through Troilus, the poet focuses on a philosophical issue. How does Troilus' intense, private love participate in, but also distinguish itself from, the fluctuations and changeability of human life in the mortal world? Like Paris in the *Heroides* and the *Roman de Troie*, and like Boccaccio's Troilo, Troilus himself *subordinates* the Trojan War as well as ordinary time and literal space to his intense inner "felyng," and this process of subordination largely determines the character of his version of the Trojan matter. At the same time, Chaucer's narrating "I" coordinates a study of Troilus' lyrical inner experience with his larger Lollian matter – the "woful" subject of Trojan (and earthly) mutability and transiency.

The effect of Troilus' story as the poet develops it is not simply tragic, in part because the hero, like several of his French forebears, is inept in love.

Chaucer delights in representing not only the lyric intensity of a first love and the suffering that follows from it but also the narrative comedy of youthful inexperience.⁶⁰ As with Benoît's anxious Medea, the *Eneas*-poet's Lavine, and Guillaume de Lorris's Amant, much that is comic and charming in Chaucer's development of Troilus has to do with the hero's uneducated earnestness as a lover. When, on the night he is first to make love to Criseyde, Troilus swoons, and when Pandarus undresses him and puts him into Criseyde's bed, we are witnessing not grand passion but adolescent fear. The delicate balance between comedy and tragedy in Chaucer's depiction of his young hero contributes powerfully to the poem's extraordinarily poignant (rather than tragic or satiric) tone and enriches its themes. It also adumbrates the joyous, comedic energy of the poet's Christian epilogue.

In this last respect, Troilus' "felyng" version of the Trojan matter points the way, albeit indirectly, to a higher, more spiritual and joyful notion of human love than is available in either Benoît's *Troie* or Boccaccio's *Filostrato*. In Chaucer's design, Troilan love does not serve merely as grist for the wily Pandarus, as it does in Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, nor is Troilus shown to be simply though sympathetically foolish as Benoît and Guillaume de Lorris's lovers are. Instead, Chaucer uses his young hero to develop the most noble pagan version of the Trojan matter to be found in his poem. To be sure, Troilus as a neophyte in love collaborates with Pandarus in his schemes and his lies; but he does so by translating his friend's designs (and his matter of illicit, secret, sexual grace) into higher terms. "[C]alle it gentillesse,/ Compassioun, and felawship, and trist," he declares in Book III, fearing that Pandarus may construe his own plotting (fairly enough) as "bauderye" (393-406). Unlike Pandarus, Troilus authenticates the "truth" of his experience only by reference to the internal motions of his heart. With a youthful confidence, he steadfastly refuses the authority of learned books, the wisdom of his elders, and even empirical observation. Yet this refusal is not entirely mistaken. Chaucer, in his compassionate treatment of Troilus in love, celebrates the heart's power to know, if only in a limited way, what neither the pagan *auctoritates* nor pagan prophecy nor the devastations of history can teach.

The special quality of Troilus' affective, internalized, private version of the Trojan matter returns us to Ovid's *Heroides*, Benoît de Sainte-Maure's inner perspective in the *Roman de Troie*, Lavine's intensely personal intuitions of love in the *Eneas*, and Amant's dream in the *Roman de la rose*. At the same time, Chaucer's hero introduces Boethian questions about the nature of all human love in broadly philosophical terms. To underscore the English poet's traditional but also novel direction in developing his

Troilus, I want to return for a moment to one of his first major additions to Boccaccio's *Filostrato* – the *canticus Troili* (1.400–34) – a song that provides an important frame for the hero's entire experience (and transformation) of the larger matter of Troy. This song, as everyone knows, translates a Petrarchan sonnet, though Chaucer makes certain interesting changes in his source and then attaches it to the Italian Troiolo's prayer to Love.⁶¹

The opening questions of the *canticus* – “If no love is, O God, what fele I so?/ And if love is, what thing and which is he?” (400–1) – are not altogether unlike Lavine's question to her mother in the *Eneas*, “Tell me, what is love?” As in the *Eneas*, moreover, the questions, which are private and personal, are introduced within a larger public, social context. In this regard, they recapitulate the interrogatory character of the *romans antiques* and their interest in exploring situational moral questions pertinent to individuals in their private as well as their public lives. But Troilus' questions also have a metaphysical dimension. Does love exist, and if so what is it? These questions as a philosophical issue will reverberate provocatively at crucial moments in the poem. And they will not be answered in a definitive way until after the pagan *Book of Troilus* proper has come to its tragic end.

What Troilus seeks above all in the *canticus*, as a means of controlling his changeable inner life, is transcendent peace and security. Imagining that the “maladie” of love will lead him to his death, he prays for help to the god of Love (bringing us back at the same time to Boccaccio's text). He does not ask, as the Italian Troiolo had, for assistance in changing Criseida's attitude towards him, but rather that his “lord” will receive him into his service. As he links the Petrarchan *canticus* to Troilus' prayer, Chaucer connects the young hero's condition “bitwixen” two states with his natural human yearning for stability. Troilus hopes to escape from his inner fluctuations – his steerless condition – by means of devotion to the god of Love and by giving himself in feudal service to Criseyde. As the Lollian narrative will reveal, Criseyde and the god of Love, like the Trojans' Palladium, will fail Troilus in his hope for *sikernesse*. One of them is a fearful, changeable woman in an uncertain world and the other, a pagan god. Yet Troilus is to be praised for identifying so clearly his restless inner condition and for praying to a god, a transcendent deity, for security and rest.

The young hero's heart also directs his well-known *canticus* in Book III as, in a garden, some days after he and Criseyde have consummated their love, he sings to Pandarus. Adapted from Boethius' *Consolatio*, this song praises love as the force that governs all creation. The song dramatizes in recognizably philosophical and even religious terms Troilus' deep, legitimate yearning for order and accord, for a divine power capable of

"constraining" contrary, unbridled forces. He prays that the divine author of nature may bind all creatures with love. Yet, as usual, the Lollian, pagan narrative context and the *particular* kind of Pandaric erotic love from which Troilus develops his Boethian theory undermine the possibility of realizing his dream. The paean of praise he offers to "god, that auctour is of kynde" is sung not in a temple but a garden, the auditor is Pandarus, and the object of Troilus' transformative love is the ever-fearful Criseyde. The ironic juxtaposition of language and context shows us that Troilus is foolish not because he feels love and intuitively links it to divine order but because he has naively located his love in a human being and in earthly *fine amor*, and these are both certain, by their nature, to betray his best hopes.

Troilus' last *canticus* in the poem (v.638-44) records the absolute failure of these hopes in terms that recall his first song. This song initiates the last, sad movement in the poem's elegiac curve as the young lover awaits his lady in vain, trying to "interpret" and transform the ten days' time to the advantage of future *joie*, imagining that the winds he feels on his face are her sighs, supposing that he sees her on the road to Troy. In his wait, his heart continues to fluctuate between darkness and light but the narrative has made it impossible for Pandarus (and the audience) to see anything but hopelessness in his misplaced love. Troilus' prayers to the god of love have not been answered nor have events justified his praises either of Criseyde or of the pagan deity.

To the very end of Chaucer's *litel bok*, however, Troilus remains true to his faith in *trouthe* and love, though he also knows from experience that he has misplaced his trust in loving and believing Criseyde. After he has seen his brooch on Diomedes' tunic, he declares: "O lady myn, Criseyde,/ Where is youre feith, and where is youre biheste?/ Where is youre love? Where is youre trouthe?" (1674-76) As he prays to the god of love, he demonstrates an intuitive sense that a true deity ought to deliver benevolent justice. He rightly yearns for the triumph of transcendent good in the world: "O God . . . that oughtest taken heede/ To fortheren trouthe, and wronges to punyce,/ Whi nyltow don a vengeaunce of this vice?" (v.1706-8). Troilus' beauty and his nobility reside in the aspiration of his spirit, and Chaucer celebrates, in this respect, the intuitive grasp of truth his youthful innocence allows. The poem's epilogue, however, shows that the young, idealistic Trojan has not known enough, as a pagan, to place his hope in the actual spiritual transcendence promised by Christian revelation.

Yet, in the end, at the boundary of his Lollian text, Chaucer saves Troilus, allowing him the realization of his noble intuitions about *trouthe* and love. Translated to the "holughnesse of the eighthe sphere," he "fully gan despise/ This wrecched world" as he experiences the "pleyn felicite/

That is in hevene above" (v.1816–19). In an act of poetic grace, Chaucer moves his young hero from the highest conception of earthly plenitude in love a pagan can imagine to its appropriate, though still pagan "heavenly" reward: spiritual plenitude in celestial bliss. Yet, even in this translation, as we shall see later in this chapter, Chaucer does not move us outside the secular terms of his Lollian *matere*. Troilus' vision is not Dante's, though it bears a relationship of analogy to it. We must wait for the poet's epilogue, beyond the boundaries of his Lollian *roman antique*, for the Christian lessons on transcendence towards which Troilus' intuition steadily points.

THE ROMAUNCE OF THEBES, CASSANDRE'S "OLDE STORIES"
AND STATIUS' *THEBAID* IN THE DESIGN OF *TROILOUS*

I turn now from Troilus' internalized version of the Trojan matter, with its intuitive philosophical and even spiritual import, to Cassandre and to the "romaunce" of Thebes, introduced in Book II of *Troilus* and developed in Book v. As Alastair Minnis has argued, Troilus and Cassandre are "the two most enlightened pagans in the poem."⁶² If Chaucer gives his young hero the power to intuit the possibility of transcendent love and a "trewe" world, he grants his Cassandre strictly rational, factual knowledge of Fortune's treacherous ways in the *saeculum*.⁶³ In book v, the two visions clash, as they must, because one reaches towards spiritual transcendence in spite of the world's ways while the other involves a form of Stoic fatalism. While Troilus shares his sister's fatalistic views to a large extent (as, for example, in his discourse on "necessitee" and free will [iv.956–1082]), he also goes beyond her in his dream of perfect love.

Our first encounter with the "siege of Thebes" occurs near the beginning of Book II in the scene to which I referred in my Introduction. Pandarus, entering Criseyde's house, walks in on a setting conventional in romance. Criseyde and two other ladies, seated in a "paved parlour," listen to a maiden reading to them from a book.⁶⁴ Pandarus' arrival interrupts the reading, but Chaucer does not leave the scene until we know a good deal about the book in question. When Pandarus asks about it, Criseyde responds by describing her reading in detail (II.100–5). Because she calls the book a "romaunce" we must assume that it is a vernacular translation of the Latin *Thebaid* – the twelfth-century *Roman de Thèbes* or some version of it.⁶⁵ Criseyde's description of the "romaunce" also calls attention to its character as a *written* text. She knows just the place on the page "at these lettres rede" where the reading has stopped.⁶⁶ For a moment, very briefly, in the image of Criseyde's book, Chaucer locates the whole of the *Roman de Thèbes* in relation to his own story of Troy. Just so, earlier medieval scribes

had often placed the tale of Thebes beside Benoît's *Roman de Troie* as two parts of the same great history, detailing the processes of ancient treachery, pride, Fortune, and destruction.⁶⁷

In *Troilus*, the "romaunce" of Thebes in general, and the episode of Amphiorax's death in particular, seem to signal the wisdom of pagan books and authoritative prophets, available to those who read and heed them.⁶⁸ In Chaucer's argument, moreover, Criseyde's book is directly tied to its Latin source as Pandarus (perhaps condescendingly) assures his niece that he knows the ancient work of Statius well: "Al this knowe I myselve,/ And al th'assege of Thebes and the care;/ For herof ben ther maked bookes twelve" (II.106-8). Yet, when Criseyde stops reading in *Troilus*, her book is replaced not by a comparable book or guide to serious wisdom, but by Pandarus. The "romaunce" of Thebes, the "bokes twelve" of Statius' *Thebaid*, Bishop Amphiorax, and the inevitable end of the Thebes-story in destruction are abruptly replaced by Pandarus' call to "daunce" and "don to May som observaunce" (II.111-12). Throughout this episode, Chaucer seems to be juxtaposing the academically based, old-fashioned *roman antique* of Thebes (and his own *Troilus*) with Pandarus' more immediate, playful interest in love.

When Pandarus first breaks in on the ladies, as he apologizes for his intrusion, the poet introduces a signal difference between the uncle's concerns and the highly praised book's:

But I am sory that I have yow let
To herken of youre book ye preysen thus.
For Goddes love, what seith it? telle it us!
Is it of love?" (II.94-97)

Had the book been about love, Pandarus implies, he might well have joined the ladies for the reading. But once he knows that it deals with the "care" of the Thebes story, he moves quickly from the book to play. In fact, at this very moment in the poem, Pandarus actively begins his project of replacing the book of Thebes, and books like it describing the actual way of the world, with his own form of romance: his text will enclose an amoral Ovidian art of *fine amor*.

For most of Chaucer's *Troilus*, then, the model of the serious, "historical" and moral *roman antique* recedes into the background. In Book v, however, it resurfaces, in Cassandre's "reading" of "a few . . . olde stories" to Troilus. Once again, the story of Thebes is presented, only to be rejected. The barest hint for Cassandre's role in the narrative appears in Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, but Chaucer greatly alters and "encreases" his source.⁶⁹ He makes her a serious prophet as Benoît de Sainte-Maure had

also done, and he ties her instruction to Troilus' important dream of the boar lying with his lady. In the scene under consideration (v. 1450-1540), Troilus turns to "Sibille his suster . . . / That called was Cassandre" (v. 1450-51) in order to clarify the meaning of his boar-dream. Editors and critics alike have found Cassandre's "prophecy" puzzling, and one part of it, at least, unnecessary.⁷⁰ Yet when we examine it in relation to the larger presence of the Thebes story in *Troilus* its purpose becomes clear.

Cassandre's method of explicating Troilus' dream bears heavily on Chaucer's own techniques of composition as well as his sense of the academic literary tradition from which his *roman antique* springs. In her elucidation, Cassandre does not offer an analytic interpretation. Instead, she tells "olde stories," all of which, in her composition, point to a single theme or lesson about Fortune's treacheries. In her telling, she weaves together narratives from at least four classical and classicizing texts: Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Statius' *Thebaid*, the *Roman de Thèbes*, and the *Roman de Troie*. The lesson she teaches has emphatically to do with *ends* – with the destructive workings of Fortune not only for Troilus, but, by extension, for the kingdoms of Thebes and Troy:

Thow most a fewe of olde stories heere,
To purpos how that Fortune overthrowe
Hath lordes olde.

(v. 1459-61; my emphasis)

As Cassandre, smiling, interprets her "fewe olde stories," it is as if she were offering Troilus an epitome of medieval classroom philosophy drawn from ancient Stoic writers.

Chaucer takes his theme about Fortune's cruel power, as well as his idea for Cassandre as a prophetess, from the *Roman de Troie*. But his singular characterization of her as "smiling" is his own addition. In the *Roman de Troie*, Cassandra typically presents her warnings with a "cuer doloros," "dolent . . . triste . . . ploros" (27189-90). Her principal function is to warn of "mainz dueus, maintes aversitez" (27195). In Chaucer's account, Cassandre's role parallels that of her counterpart in *Troie*. She points to the inevitable end of things in destruction. But her smile is as important as her instruction. It reflects a philosophical attitude towards destruction and the workings of Fortune in the mortal world which demands comparison with other attitudes in the poem towards the *matere* of Troy. As Winthrop Wetherbee has recently argued, Cassandre's "view of the events with which she deals is neither comic nor tragic, and the effect of her detachment is to enhance the impression of inevitability which her summary [of Statius] conveys."⁷¹ In a provocative critique, Wetherbee goes on to describe Cassandre's prophecy as "dead poetry."

In a certain respect, though not in Wetherbee's sense, this assessment seems to me correct. Cassandre composes a serious literary narrative in the vernacular, directly depending from ancient, revered sources. Two languages operate in relationship to one another as Cassandre "translates" Statius' *Thebaid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* for Troilus. What dominates her translation is the *sentence* – the moral theme – which shapes her telling. In all these respects, Cassandre's "tale" seems to recapitulate Chaucer's notion of the earliest phase in the history of the *romans antiques* when they were most intimately connected with the secular moral tradition of classical poetry and the medieval arts curriculum. Her swift, spare account of inevitable death and destruction coincides with Benoît de Sainte-Maure's frequent emphasis on the workings of destiny and Fortune.⁷² But Cassandre does not share Benoît's awe or sorrow at the "duel" caused by Fortune. For her it is neither "estrangle" nor "merveillos", as Benoît would have it (e.g., 18684). She simply tells the truth about all secular history as part of her own prophetic knowledge.

What is "dead" about Cassandre's poetry, if we adopt Wetherbee's term, is not so much its matter-of-fact character as its impotence in relation to Troilus. Her account of the Thebes story and her correct implication of Troy in the tragedy of worldly history represents a wisdom – the wisdom of the ancients and their faithful medieval clerks – which cannot function for Troilus. He does not want to learn from the sage historical and moral poetry of the *auctores*. "Thow seyst nat soth, . . . thow sorceresse," Troilus declares "with cruel herte," full of anger (v. 1520, 1534–35). Cassandre's accurate, factual and prophetic lessons about the world contradict Troilus' idealizing, romantic vision of his love. This is not to say that Troilus is entirely wrong in rejecting Cassandre's vision. He has a religious view of love. He wants the world to be "trewe" even as he wants Criseyde to be true. This juxtaposition of Cassandre's and Troilus' view of the same history, like other juxtapositions in the poem, calls attention to limits and possibilities in both positions.⁷³ Neither view taken by itself represents a full, comprehensive understanding of Chaucer's Lollian matter. Yet it is towards just such an understanding that the poem as a whole tends.

As a teller, Chaucer's Cassandre is more interested in moral truth than in herself, and her art turns outward towards philosophy. In this regard, she is, by design, not a rhetorician. She makes no effort to manipulate her listener, to lead him by degrees, as Pandarus, for example, would, to accept her position. Moreover, hers is a message without significant "ambages" or words "with double visage": she only describes the way of the world, and her smile illustrates her Stoic acceptance of Fortune's devastations. Cassandre requires a head-on confrontation with the facts. And her "tale"

provides one normative standard by which to judge other interpretations of the matter of Troy also argued in Chaucer's poem. Because her account is designed to represent history, fact, and truth, however, it lacks two kinds of "solas" that appear prominently elsewhere in Chaucer's poem and cast their aura over other versions of the Trojan matter in *Troilus* – one compassionate (the narrator's), another erotic (Pandarus'), still another religious as well as erotic (Troilus').

Throughout his career, Chaucer returns again and again to the problem of the poet and the poem in relation to audiences. How does a literary text, whether ancient or modern, engage its listeners or readers? In what ways does it affect their emotions, their minds, their behavior? These concerns are not novel with Chaucer; they play an important role in the classical rhetorical handbooks studied in the schools. But Chaucer, like Dante, brings the question of poetry's powers to life in his work, partly by creating a variety of "authors," texts, and "readers" within his poems and examining their interactions.⁷⁴ His own *Troilus*, like Criseyde's *romance* of Thebes and Cassandre's "stories," participates fully in the serious moral tradition of the French and Italian *romans antiques*. Yet Chaucer's poem, unlike the texts abruptly rejected by his ancient heroine and hero, will be able, he implies, to hold its public. Its author, unlike Cassandre, presents a "felyng" account of the Trojan affair, deferring, through Pandarus, Troilus, and Criseyde, the "care" that rightly characterizes his historical *matere*. In *medias res*, he imitates Criseyde's uncle, overtly deploying his poetic skills in order to disguise, for the sake of *solas*, secular history's actual, tragic teleology. He also lingers, as Troilus and Criseyde do, over lyric moments of transient joy. Nevertheless, by the way he orchestrates his whole "bok," following the lead of the continental *romans antiques* and his own Cassandre, Chaucer remains ultimately responsible to the painful *historia* he recounts.

CRISEYDE AS A "SLYDING" READER OF THE MATTER OF TROY

Up to this point I have been considering the operations of four different *auctores* in *Troilus*, all of whom interpret and dispose the basic matter of Troy for their respective audiences. I turn now to Criseyde, the most elusive of Chaucer's protagonists in the poem. Like Cassandre, Pandarus, and Troilus, she is a character within the text who must, willy-nilly, respond to the Lollian matter of Troy. Unlike Troilus, Pandarus, and Cassandre, however, her way of reading her world does not allow her a single-minded, steadfast position in relation to the *aventures* that constitute the *matere* of Troy.

Earlier in this chapter I suggested that the "ancient" text of Lollius, recording the texture of passing life in Troy in the midst of war, provides the (inherently unstable) ground or foundation for all other views of the Trojan matter in the poem. Among the pagan characters, Pandarus manipulates the received *matere* for the sake of play and pleasure; Troilus translates it to serve his transcendent vision of love and truth; and Cassandre provides it with a clear, fatalistic teleology. Criseyde, by contrast, melts into the texture of Lollius' *matere* without ever being able to rise fully above it. For her the experience of the Lollian matter is of a strictly linear, circumstantial, changeable progress towards an unknown and unknowable conclusion. Chaucer's heroine has no whole, final vision of her circumstances, and she therefore proves as treacherous, in her own way, as the Lollian matter of Troy itself in which she participates. She lives within discrete moments and discrete configurations of language. And she responds to them *as they present themselves*, looking analytically neither to beginnings nor endings beyond the temporary (and often temporizing) conclusions she reaches about her situation in each moment.

Chaucer's Criseyde has been the subject of sharp controversy among critics. Some have viewed her as a moral emblem of feminine treachery, while others – the majority in recent years – have thought her enigmatic and psychologically inscrutable. E. Talbot Donaldson, for example, suggests that Chaucer designed his Criseyde so as to preclude any final moral categorization of her on the reader's part.⁷⁵ She does not, he argues, "operate according to recognizable patterns of behaviour, responding logically to the stresses that the situation imposes on them."⁷⁶ In the end, "we are never allowed to form any very precise or consistent image of her; indeed we are actively prevented from doing so."⁷⁷

In the next several pages I want to recast Donaldson's (and others') psychological conception of an enigmatic, inconsistent Criseyde in different terms. Criseyde *is* difficult to grasp as a consistent image, but she is so, I think, because of the crucial, brilliantly designed part she plays in Chaucer's philosophical study of *fine amor* (and earthly love generally) in relation to the shifting *matere* of Troy. Criseyde, in the English poet's conception of her, is a living manifestation – an example studied in the process of becoming – of the hermeneutic problems the changeable, inherently deceptive matter of Troy, and of the mortal world, necessarily poses, especially for fearful, unwary human beings. She is, as Donaldson has argued, a creature of the narrator's love – or, as I would argue, his "compassioun." But she is also a creature of Lollius' accurately imagined, immanently deceptive life in Troy, and Pandarus' designs, and Troilus' desires, and Diomedes' rhetoric. In sum, she slides her way into the

treacheries of the mortal, circumstantial world and also into the dreams of the most noble as well as the most calculating of pagans. Moreover, she does so, in Chaucer's argument, because she is a woman. Her way of experiencing and "reading" the world is, in the poem's wholly consistent dramatization of her, fundamentally different from that of the men who, for the most part, authorize and determine her life.

As everyone knows, Chaucer's heroine, like Benoît's Briseida and Boccaccio's Criseida, is "slydyng of corage." She is, moreover, as J.D. Burnley has shown, like all women as medieval clerks typically described them – flexible, soft, and "receptive to every impression."⁷⁸ Like the women Guido delle Colonne, a militant antifeminist, condemns in his *Historia destructionis Troiae*, she also moves from man to man. But in addition, in Chaucer's elaborate composition, the English Criseyde moves from one rhetorical form to another. In this capacity she represents the uncommitted but interested, tempting reader. Criseyde responds to her several *auctores* in the poem by entering successively into each of the conventional forms of *aventure* presented to her. In each case she has the opportunity to collude with or reject the compositional process. Her way of becoming the poem's (and the world's) *matere* depends on how she responds to the "texts" or literary forms she encounters.

What gives Chaucer's portrayal of Criseyde its great power and mystery is his insistence on exploring *why* Criseyde moves from form to form. In the English poet's argument, she does so not because of *concupiscentia* but because she is the "ferfulleste wight/ That myghte be" (II.450–51) in an uncertain world.⁷⁹ Instead of presenting his heroine, following Boccaccio, simply as a moral exemplum of feminine inconstancy, he studies her dramatically as she responds *seriatim*, *from a woman's point of view*, to the slippery secular world she inhabits – a world in which she "nyste what was best to rede" (I.96 and v.18). In *Troilus*, Criseyde *as a woman* exemplifies the plight of indecisive, limited human beings generally, located as they must be *in medias res*. Like the philosophical Cassandre, the player Pandarus, the "ancient" poet Lollius, the dreamer Troilus, and Chaucer's compassionate "I," she attempts, in her own way, to control, however futilely, her shifting, circumstantial history in the *saeculum*.

Chaucer's imagination of Criseyde

Our first image of Criseyde in Book I of *Troilus* gives us the ground for her subsequent development in the poem. In the *Filostrato*, Boccaccio had introduced his Criseida straightforwardly as the object of the narrator's admiration and his "male gaze."⁸⁰ Her beauty is like an angel's, beyond mortal limits (I.11). By contrast, before Chaucer describes Criseyde's

Chaucer's *Book of Troilus and Criseyde*

appearance, he focuses our attention on her essential lack of security in Troy. As a daughter abandoned by her father, she is, in the narrator's words, a victim of "meschaunce."⁸¹ Her situation in Troy is precarious:

For of hire lif she was ful sore in drede,
As she that nyste what was best to rede;
For bothe a widewe was she and allone
Of any frend to whom she dorste hire mone. (I.95-98)

Criseyde has good reason for her fear: her father is a traitor; she is socially isolated; and she lacks authoritative counsel as to how to conduct herself. To indicate his heroine's awareness of her plight, Chaucer has her choose a place for herself in the temple on the occasion of the Palladian festival "byhynden other folk, in litel brede" (I.179).

In the course of the poem, several male characters – Troilus, Pandarus, Diomede – persuade Criseyde to escape this fearful sense of her life by means of other, much more attractive, self-aggrandizing images. Yet the narrator's first somber description of her is never completely erased, because it cannot be. Criseyde's fearful state is simply true to Lollius' *matere*. It reflects the heroine's actual situation in Troy (and also an attitude reasonable enough for humankind in the unredeemed, mortal, pagan world). To be sure, in subsequent episodes Criseyde will seek and find apparent, temporary refuge in Hector, who promises her the protection of the royal family; in the comfortable domestic spaces of her *palays*; in Deiphebus' dining hall and Pandarus' house. But neither Hector as the "townes wal" (II.154) nor Pandarus – than whom there is "no man" to whom she is more "holden, trewely" (II.241-42) – can finally deliver Criseyde from her fearful life or her "meschaunce." Nor can Troilus, except temporarily, as he does in the great love-scene of Book III:

Criseyde, *al quyt from every drede and tene*,
As she that juste cause hadde hym to triste,
Made hym swych feste it joye was to sene,
Whan she his trouthe and clene entente wiste.
(III.1226-29; my emphasis)

The poem's language insists, *at this moment*, on the power trust has to banish fear.

Yet in the Lollian world of *Troilus* all such moments are fleeting. When, at the beginning of Book v, Criseyde is led towards the Greek camp, the narrator recalls his very first image of her:

Ful redy was at prime Diomede
Criseyde unto the Grekis oost to lede,
For sorwe of which she felt hire herte blede,
As she that nyste what was best to rede.
(v.15-18; my emphasis)

None of Chaucer's emphasis on Criseyde's fears, her well-placed anxieties about the war, her awareness of her precarious social position, is to be found in the *Filostrato*. Nor does Boccaccio direct our attention to the methods by which his Criseida reads either her world or the "texts" presented to her by male characters in the poem. Chaucer, by contrast, imagines for us exactly how Criseyde interprets each of her *aventures* as they fall in her way. Her interpretations begin always with reasonable fear, natural anxiety, or "care." But her impulse, in every case, is to transform her situation and to transcend her fear by self-enhancing, ego-protective, idealizing acts of feeling and imagination.

Criseyde's art of reading: "I shall felen what he meneth"

We first witness Criseyde's ability to change her mind – to respond to the same situation in more than one way almost simultaneously – in an exquisitely telling but easily overlooked stanza in Book 1. Troilus is gazing at Criseyde in the temple, and Chaucer begins the stanza by translating Boccaccio almost exactly:

To Troilus right wonder wel with alle
Gan for to like hire mevyng and hire chere,
Which somdel deignous was, for she let falle
Hire look a lite aside in swich manere,
Ascaunces, "What, may I nat stonden here?" (1.288–92)

But the concluding couplet of the rhyme-royal stanza is a Chaucerian in-etching:

And after that hir lokyng gan she lighte,
That nevere thoughte hym seen so good a syghte. (1.293–94)

At this point we have no idea what has caused two successive, very different "visages" in Criseyde – one disdainful, the other inviting. It may be, as Barry Windeatt has surmised, that Chaucer simply wanted to give his Criseyde "a quickly changing, expressive face."⁸² But the careful shape of the stanza and the deliberate addition suggests more. The poet seems here to be foreshadowing his close study in subsequent books of the mysterious, "feminine," irrational processes by which Criseyde feels her way from fear or social caution to comfort, confidence, and pleasure. Though the stanza might be passed over without much notice, it raises fundamental questions as to what inner motions prompt Criseyde to show a "double visage" in the temple – questions Chaucer probes deeply in his later development of his heroine.

Chaucer's *Book of Troilus and Criseyde*

In a crucial sequence of scenes in Book II, the English poet scrutinizes the several steps by which Criseyde slips into love.⁸³ Here Chaucer gives us his fullest, deepest excursion into her processes of thought and feeling. Book II, more than any other in the poem, belongs to Criseyde and her world – her domestic spaces, her life with her ladies-in-waiting, her comfortable daily round of activities, the private recesses of her mind. At the start of the second book, we observe her sitting in her *parlour* with two other women, listening to a maiden reading a romance. Her uncle, with whom she is clearly on very familiar terms, drops in to visit and she graciously stops the reading to entertain him. She and Pandarus enjoy playful conversation and the talk leads eventually to the subject of Troilus and his love for her. As we have already seen, Pandarus skillfully draws his niece as a “fearful” but curious reader – half-unaware – into his rhetorical process and his special *matere* of sexual grace.

After Pandarus has left, Criseyde retires to her “closet” to mull over “every word . . . / That he had seyde, as it com hire to mynde” (II.601–2). As the heroine confronts her uncle’s surprising news, Chaucer gives us a stanza with a shape not altogether unlike the stanza in Book I describing Criseyde’s “double visage.” Once again she is alone, but this time physically as well as psychologically. In this case, Chaucer’s narrator draws us into her consciousness, as he had not done in Book I. Through him we study her nearly simultaneous double reaction to Pandarus and his “newe cas” – that is the new happening and the new moment:

[Criseyde] wex somdel astoned in hire thought
Right for the newe cas; but whan that she
Was ful avysed, tho fond she right nought
Of peril why she ought afered be. (II.603–6)

For the first line and a half of the stanza, Criseyde is “somewhat” stupefied, overcome with wonder at her “newe cas.” Then in a curiously passive subordinate clause – “but whan that she was ful avysed” – the narrator indicates that she has taken counsel concerning her “cas.” Yet Criseyde is still alone. She both is and is not, the syntax suggests, the author of the “advice” that changes her mind. We can have no idea what length of time elapses between Criseyde’s astonishment at the news and her calm, confident acceptance of it as a situation *she* can shape. *Poetically*, however, the change takes place in an instant, and it parallels the comparable *volte face* in Book I. Characteristically, the transformation involves the overcoming of Criseyde’s habitual fear. She can find “nought/ Of peril why she ought afered be” (II.605–6). In the privacy of her mind, she believes that she can form the situation according to her own wishes.

In the very next scene Chaucer continues his scrutiny of Criseyde's "reading" as she slides into love. Responding to a great cry from her household, she looks out the window. Troilus, fresh from battle, rides past her house, representing at once the image of the noble young warrior and the painful matter of war in Troy. From her private, protected vantage point, she beholds his beauty, hears the great praise accorded him, and "[lets] it so softe in hire herte synke,/ That to hireself she seyde: 'Who yaf me drynke?'" (II.650-51). The episode itself – Troilus riding past Criseyde's window – Chaucer drew from the *Filostrato*. Boccaccio had given two stanzas to it, placing it *after* Criseida has fully persuaded herself to love Troilo. By contrast, Chaucer expands the moment into seven stanzas and uses it to preface a prolonged exploration, largely invented by him, of Criseyde's inner processes as she "decides" to love Troilus. The three scenes that follow – including her inner debate with herself about her new love, her interpretation of Antigone's love-song in her garden, and her dream of the eagle – occupy forty-seven stanzas, nearly a fifth of Book II. At the same time the sequence as a whole, beginning at line 596, juxtaposes in rapid succession several different kinds of experience and orders of time or temporal rhythm – history, an apparently sudden, overwhelming movement of the heart ("Who yaf me drynke?"), interior debate, a playful garden stroll, a formal love-lyric, an *explication de texte*, and a vision in sleep.

In describing Criseyde's way of reading as she confronts each unexpected moment and *cas*, the poet develops as inner drama a medieval academic theory about the way women were thought to respond to what they experienced. Like women generally, she lets impressions "sink softly into her heart," responding to each impression "flexibly" – without interposing a stable system of rational interpretation.⁸⁴ In the sequence of moments we are examining, Criseyde, safely within the confines of her palace and its garden, either alone or accompanied by other women, in a cloistral, protected, inward, "feminine" environment, reads her way imaginatively, feelingly into love.

It is important to note at this point that Chaucer does not limit such reading to his heroine or to women. His narrator is not free from felt responses to discrete, powerful moments in his narrative as he encounters them *seriatim*. Nor is Pandarus, who is a master at shaping moments to arouse or enhance feeling. What distinguishes Criseyde from any of her pagan male counterparts and from the Stoic Cassandre (though not entirely from Chaucer's compassionate narrator) is her lack of a systematic or single-minded overview by which to control her reading of her situation in Troy. She is, in Chaucer's carefully orchestrated argument, subject to each moment, each *cas*, each impression, each use of rhetoric as it enters her consciousness.

Chaucer's *Book of Troilus and Criseyde*

The sequence in which Chaucer dramatizes Criseyde imagining her way into love is crucial to his development of her character. His models for her long inner dialogue (II.701–808) were certainly Ovid's *Heroides* xvii and Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, but he may also have glanced at Medea's private self-scrutiny in the *Roman de Troie* or Lavine's interior debates in *Eneas*. Yet his subtle reportage of Criseyde's changing moods in *Troilus* achieves a novel effect. Through her multiple responses Chaucer illustrates her unconscious participation in Lollius' matter of mutability.

What Criseyde thinks on one side and the other in her inner dialogue is carefully recorded, according to "myn auctour." The rhyme-royal stanzas divide her arguments neatly into parts, separating the positions pro and con from each other as if to suggest the order of a logical process leading to a reasonable conclusion. Yet, in the narrator's account, the effect of Criseyde's alternating moods and thoughts in the debate is not that of a logical process. Instead, her way of arguing parallels the surprising changeability of the weather and the seasons. Her states of consciousness (following from her arguments to herself) are, as Chaucer's teller puts it, like the sun in March, shining brightly one minute, then changing its face as clouds, blown by the wind, cover it (II.764–70). Considering the price as well as the rewards of love, Criseyde fears particularly the loss of her *sikernesne* – a security that depends, in her view, on her freedom. For women, as she says, can do nothing in woe but "wepe and sitte and thinke" (II.782–83). She, like Ovid's Helen in *Heroides* xvii, fears gossip and the treacheries of men and she ends her negative musings with a question, "And who may stoppen every wikked tonge,/ Or sown of belles whil that thei ben ronge?" (804–5).⁸⁵ But then from her storehouse of opinions and proverbs, she suddenly draws an optimistic saw to counter her fears: "He which that nothing undertaketh,/ Nothyng n'acheveth, be hym looth or deere" (807–8). Still more thoughts crowd her consciousness, again awakening "drede."

The process ends, however, not with a resolution of the question but with a telling description of her characteristic ambivalence:

bitwixen tweye,
She rist hire up, and wente hire for to pleye. (811–12)

There is a certain kind of wisdom in Criseyde's choice of play over serious moral analysis and the rules of logic. But it is not the wisdom of Lollius or Cassandre or Troilus or even, quite, of Pandarus. Chaucer's heroine shares Pandarus' preference for pleasure and Troilus' desire for stability and certainty. These preferences, however, issue not, as Pandarus' and Troilus' do, from a philosophical program but rather from an unsystematic,

apparently untutored series of conflicting, nearly simultaneous responses to the immediate situation, the present moment.

When Criseyde leaves her inner debate without concluding it, she takes her three nieces – Flexippe, Tharbe, and Antigone – with her. Together, the four women (all related, by no coincidence, to Pandarus) go down the stairs and into a garden in search of play. No place more lovely, well cultivated, comfortable, and apparently safe than this garden presents itself to us in the world Criseyde inhabits. It is a sort of inner sanctum, especially appropriate for women, leisure, and pleasure. Chaucer's choice of the English word "yerd" emphasizes its familiar, homely character as he describes not a Trojan but a fourteenth-century English garden.⁸⁶ The garden is a "large" place, unlike Deiphebus' and Pandarus' small bedchambers. All of the garden's pathways are railed and well shaded with flowering trees. Earthen benches provide rest from walking and the paths are well sanded. Not only Criseyde but also the narrator recognizes and appreciates the idyllic, sequestered comfort of the place. Indeed, Chaucer's teller thrills to the delight of the scene. "It joye was to see," he declares, the ladies walking "up and down" with "other of hire wommen a gret route" following her (II.815-17).

If Criseyde's garden embraces the ladies' pleasant (though circumscribed) strolling, it also encloses a second form of play as her niece Antigone sings her a song.⁸⁷ This song, like the garden's comparably artificial order, gives promise of *sikernessee*. It celebrates, above all, the absolute protection the song's speaker claims to have found in true love. As the concluding lines of the lyric's first stanza declare:

For nevere yet thi grace no wight sente
So blisful cause as me, my lyf to lede
In alle joie and *seurte out of drede*.

(II.831-33; my emphasis)⁸⁸

Moreover, this love is "withouten jalousie or strif" (837), the lady's lover is "stoon of sikernessee" (843), and the experience of love leads the lady into virtue. The song ends with a confession that encourages Criseyde to identify with its composer:

Al dredde I first to love hym to bigynne,
Now woot I wel, ther is no peril inne. (II.874-75)

To be free from peril in love is a driving concern for Criseyde. But in order to assimilate the song's assertions to herself – to make the implied narrative her own – she asks about its actual historical circumstances.

Criseyde can identify her situation with that of the song, the narrative

suggests, only if the composer's social status and her actual history bear out the noble and attractive sentiments of the text's rhetoric. The song done, Criseyde's first question to Antigone has to do with its maker: "Who made this song now with so good entente?" "[T]he goodlieste mayde/ Of gret estat in al the town of Troye," Antigone responds – a woman who led her life "in moste honour and joye" (878–82). In assuring her aunt of the extratextual truth of the song, Criseyde's niece yokes social honor (and stability) with erotic joy – precisely the yoking Criseyde herself had earlier demanded as the necessary basis for her love in her discussion with Pandarus. But Criseyde has a further question. Is there really such bliss in love as lovers write of it? Her question is reasonable – just the kind of serious question any love poem must raise, and one the whole of Chaucer's *Troilus* explores. Yet Criseyde does not wait for an answer. The idyllic scene in the garden does not encourage probing evaluation. The episode comes abruptly to an end without a conclusion as Criseyde responds to a change in the time of day: "Ywys, it wol be nyght as faste" (898). The ladies leave the garden, following, as the narrative suggests, not the demands of logic or logical closure but the curve of passing time.

Before he concludes his heroine's reading in the garden, however, Chaucer has his narrator pause to examine Criseyde's inner consciousness once more. In the event, she has fully identified herself with the song's maker, and by that means she has accepted the truth of "every word" in the garden song. Her heart responds with a newly imprinted faith:

But every word which that she of hire herde,
 She gan to prenten in hire herte faste,
 And ay gan love hire lasse for t'agaste
 Than it dide erst, and synken in hire herte,
 That she wex somewhat able to converte. (II.899–903)

Just as the "white thynges [of day] *wexen* dymme and donne/ For lak of lyght" (908–9), so the narrative implies, Criseyde "*wex* somewhat able to converte" (903). Yet even as Chaucer's narrator records his heroine's readiness to convert (to love), he underscores the fragile, affective, poetic basis of her new faith. The verb "wex" and the adverb "somewhat" in the stanza's last line suggest at once movement and hesitation, approach and simultaneous withdrawal.

In just this indeterminate, poetic state, lulled by a nightingale, Criseyde is "seized" by deep sleep. To conclude his study of his heroine's conversion to love, Chaucer adds a dream – that most mysterious form of mental experience, always teasingly resistant to rational analysis – as another text for interpretation. Just as Criseyde is the passive recipient of sleep, so, in

the narrator's account, she receives the dream and its symbolic action passively. A white eagle wrests her heart from her breast and replaces it with his own: "And forth he fleigh, with herte left for herte" (II.931). The eagle's dream-action actually concludes the whole long series of transformative episodes that takes us from Criseyde's first sight of Troilus riding past her window to the dream. But Chaucer's narrating "I," like Criseyde, leaves the sequence of scenes – and the dream – without a word of comment. "Now lat hire slepe," he says, beginning a new stanza and a new episode, and "we oure tales holde/ Of Troilus, that is to paleis riden/ Fro the scarmuch of the which I tolde" (932–34). Suddenly we are removed from our deep, unresolved encounter with Criseyde's consciousness, the lyric time of Antigone's song, and the visionary time of the eagle's exchange of hearts. With a stunning abruptness, the narrator returns us to history and to the martial action that had triggered his heroine's private inner, inconclusive musings and her play in the first place.

In all of her behavior from the beginning to the end of the poem, Criseyde's charm – and also her remarkable effect on the shape of the narrative – results from her affective, spontaneous responses to individual moments and individual rhetorical configurations as she encounters them. She enters into each one of them "felyngly," and, in her reading, each moment, each text elicits its own unfinished, partial, often multiple response. Criseyde, as the conscious center in each moment, each circumstance, typically begins in fear or anxiety, often marked by hesitation "bitwixen tweye." Then, by means of imaginative identification with the language and desires of others, she enters into whatever action the rhetoric and the moment invite.

In Book v, Criseyde herself actually acknowledges her habitual position *vis-à-vis* the matter of her life (and the matter of Troy). Ever poised on the verge of action, she awaits arguments and circumstances that will dictate a suitable response in her. As she tells Diomedes after he has proffered his love:

Myn herte is now in tribulacioun,
And ye in armes bisy day by day.
Herafter, whan ye wonnen han the town,
Peraventure so it happen may
That whan I se that nevere yit I say
Than wol I werke that I nevere wroughte!
This word to yow ynough suffisen oughte.

...

I say not therfore that I wol yow love,
N'y say nat nay.

(v.988–94, 1002–3)

No speech of Criseyde's in the poem so fully captures her clear, unfeigned understanding of her own *modus operandi*.⁸⁹ Criseyde awaits propitious circumstances, the opportunity for attractive adventures ("so it happen may") that will propel her into action. Less calculating than the French Briseida or the Italian Criseida, she herself cannot predict from circumstance to circumstance how she will act. She knows only that she "may werke that [she] nevere wroughte," depending on what falls her way. In this regard, the English Criseyde is both like and unlike her uncle Pandarus. Both delight in seizing moments and *aventures*; both aim, by this means, to rise above history and the flux of Fortune; and both prefer comfort to woe, security to instability. Uncle and niece differ dramatically, however, in their way of determining and shaping their actions. Pandarus is a maker, actively promulgating his Epicurean philosophy of pleasure and managing language, time, and history towards his own ends. Criseyde much less systematically and less confidently falls in with the rhetoric of others and with the temporal flow. She is "made" by the several authors who devise adventures for her in the tale and by the circumstances of the Trojan world at war.

In this regard, Criseyde mirrors Lollius' matter of worldly mutability. Like the entire history or *matere* of Troy in Chaucer's *roman antique*, she is the ever-changeable poetic subject which other characters in her world seek to capture and constrain within the bounds of their various narrative forms. If the narrating "I" allows his heroine to evade categorization – to escape the finality of moral condemnation – he does so for two reasons: first, Criseyde, like the whole Lollian text, mirrors the alluring but ultimately treacherous, uncircumscribable mutability of the world; secondly, the poet's largest interests in the *Book of Troilus* are not moral, as his French and Italian forebears' had been, but existential and spiritual. Studying each of his major characters' responses to their history and dramatizing his own latter-day, compassionate reading of Lollius, he draws his audience very gradually and reluctantly into the sad truth of their own existence and the foolishness of their earthly loves. Like the ancient Trojans, we will seek and embrace moments of pleasure as if they were eternal. And like them we will be left only with loss and memories of loss.

THE ENDINGS OF *TROIUS*

The *Book of Troilus* ends – or seems to end – with just this recognition of inevitable loss.⁹⁰ Chaucer's narrating "I," following in the footsteps of Benoît de Sainte-Maure and Boccaccio, announces the "fyn" of Troilus' foolish love affair in his untimely death. All of the poetry supporting the

hero's love for Criseyde is reduced to the harsh, unrelenting fact of human mortality. In bringing his *Troilus* to its unavoidable narrative end as a secular *roman antique* – a translation of ancient matter – Chaucer aligns his writing explicitly with the great *auctores* – Virgil, Ovid, Homer, Lucan, Statius – and with the “forme of olde clerkis speche/ In poetrie.” Insofar as they record the world's ways, neither the classical poets nor the maker of *Troilus* turning his Lollius into English poetry can escape the “sorwe” of worldly mutability and loss. The only form the ancient poets (and their translators) can give to their histories, if they are true to their subject, is the form of tragedy.⁹¹

Within the context of his poem's first ending, Chaucer celebrates the ancient pagan *auctores* whose art he has imitated – though often playfully – in translating Lollius. To them he submits his “litel . . . tragedye” as to his masters in the ancient form of *poetrie*. In this context, he also prays that his little book will not be “miswritten” by subsequent scribes because of the “gret diversite/ In Englissh.” He yearns, that is, for what is not possible in the fallen world (or in a manuscript culture), namely, the stability of his own fiction as a final, permanent form. As if to shore up his first (secular) hope for an unchangeable verbal composition, Chaucer strains to end his narrative a second time. Yet, curiously, his diction suggests that he is, instead, beginning again. “But yet to purpos of my rather speche” he declares, “The wrath, as I bigan yow for to seye/ Of Troilus” (1799–1800; my emphasis). In this case, as so often in the poem proper, to begin is, at the same time, to move towards an end. In the stanza that promises to end the narrative of *Troilus* proper, the poet *both* parodically epitomizes the conventional *beginning* of the classical epic tradition and records the *end* of Troilus' earthly story in his death.

Then, in a *jeu d'esprit* as surprising as it is dazzling, Chaucer begins to transcend the self-imposed “pagan” boundaries of his own poem. Through his Trojan hero's joyful apotheosis – his ascent to the “holughnesse of the eighthe spere” (v.1806–13) – the poet's perspective shifts from earth to heaven and the passage transports us to a new form of poetry. The saving of Troilus, borrowed from Boccaccio's *Teseida*, and ultimately from Lucan, leads by an analogical leap to the story of Christian salvation. Even as he looks backward to the ancient poets and the end of his own *roman antique*, Chaucer surprises us – as he has done in various ways throughout his poem – by replacing an expected end with a beginning. Just as the narrative of his *Troilus* regularly undoes our expectations – systematically coalescing endings with beginnings in the poem's five books – so the “end” of the whole poem opens out to the beginning of infinite possibility for the immortal soul. From the death of Troilus at Achilles' hands, we as readers

Chaucer's *Book of Troilus and Criseyde*

are "translated," together with Troilus and the poet, to the music of "hevenyssh melodie," to the "pleyn felicite/ That is in hevene above" (v.1813; 1818-19), and thence to the unending Christian comedy of eternal life.

The lyric core of the epilogue to *Troilus* (v.1835-69) is a meditation on Christ's death and resurrection. Chaucer telescopes all of salvation history into three lines of prayerful poetry uncomplicated by ambiguity or irony:

And loveth hym the which that right for love
Upon a crois, oure soules for to beye,
First starf, and roos, and sit in hevene above. (v.1842-44)

Against the detailed drama of pagan daily life and pagan history recorded in the five long, rhetorically aureate books of *Troilus* as a *roman antique*, these lines offer a countervailing force of an altogether different poetic (and actual) order. Intensely and simply focused on "oure soules," they definitively locate all the "feynede loves" of the mortal world in relation to the love of Christ who "nyl falsen no wight" (1845). The matter of ancient history and the old, falsifying, poetic forms of speech that attempt to circumscribe it give way to a lyrical, true, Christian poetry of prayer.⁹²

It is in just such a prayerful mood, with his own salvation in mind, that Chaucer, in the penultimate stanza of his epilogue, addresses his contemporaries – moral Gower and philosophical Strode. From them, in the context of a shared faith in Christ's resurrection from the dead, the poet seeks not approbation for a finished book but correction (v.1856-59). Chaucer's attitude of humility and willingness to submit his text to change is not new in his poem. It is related by analogy to his submission *within* his *roman antique* to his classical forebears. And it is also linked to a pervasive note of doubt and inadequacy, coupled with compassion, that had first appeared in the prologue to Book 1 of *Troilus*. "Unliklynesse" and ignorance as to the "felyng" of erotic love have led the poet to seek "correccioun" from the beginning to the end of his Lollian narrative.⁹³ But it is only in the epilogue, outside the *roman antique* proper, that the Christian spiritual basis for this position can be fully articulated.

As he brings his epilogue to a close in its last two stanzas, Chaucer turns to the Author of authors, who is the ultimate Maker of all form. Translating the song of the glorified souls in Dante's *Paradiso* (xiv.28-30), he celebrates the Trinity "eterne on lyve," the uncircumscribed energy that "al maist circumscribe" (v.1863-65). No words, the poetry argues, and no literary form can limit or capture the divine creative power. On the other hand, paradoxically, the holy Trinity alone possesses the power, sought in

vain by the ancient poets, not only to "write" or circumscribe the mortal world in all its sad mutability but also to save it. Chaucer's *roman antique*, like the *poetrie* of his classical forebears, must record the devastations of secular transiency. But the lyric epilogue of *Troilus and Criseyde*, beginning at line 1835, after the Trojan hero's apotheosis and the narrator's moral commentary on it, recasts the history of the mortal world's treacheries as a prologue to the divine comedy of Christian salvation authored by the "oon, and two, and thre, eterne on lyve" (v.1863).

The formal contrast between the protracted Lollian narrative that constitutes the *Book of Troilus* proper as a *roman antique* and the lyric of Christian history that occupies the epilogue could not be more pointed. In the first case, the entropic processes of secular history undo the beauty of the poetry – the lyric hopes of the pagan Trojans, their legitimate, if misdirected, dreams of certainty and security, their natural human aspirations for pleasure and plenitude. But, in the second case, in the epilogue, history and lyric coincide perfectly. The story of Christ's resurrection from the dead engenders an earthly music analogically related to and perfectly in tune with the harmonies of "hevenyssh melodie." It is as if Chaucer, in his epilogue, in a single brilliant stroke, were testing the secular poetry of his direct predecessors in the tradition of the *roman antique* (and their classical models) against a very different kind of poetry exemplified, in Chaucer's implicit argument, by Dante's *Commedia*. By means of the two formally juxtaposed endings of *Troilus* – the first belonging to the secular tradition of the *roman antique* and the second, to Christian narratives of salvation – the poet recapitulates the entire history of human and divine authorship. Within the context of his poem's first (proper) ending, Chaucer celebrates (though not without irony) the ancient pagan *auctores* whose art he had followed in translating his *auctour* Lollius. In the poem's second, Christian ending, he turns above all to Dante as the exemplar of a poetic kind utterly different from the forms of "olde clerkis speche/ In poetrie." The lyric triads of the *Commedia* and Chaucer's prayerful rhyme royal in the epilogue to *Troilus* are in perfect accord with the narrative of Christian salvation even as they sing the immortal life of the soul.⁹⁴ Yet, by means of his two endings for the *Book of Troilus*, Chaucer locates himself *between* the pagan *auctores* and Dante. As a poet he has chosen to participate *both* in the secular literary problem of describing worldly mutability *and* in the prayerful lyric joy that reaches towards the certain, final truth of Christian salvation.

The consolation of Stoic virtue: Chaucer's
Knight's Tale and the tradition of the *roman*
antique

When we turn to Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, we might expect that it, like *Troilus and Criseyde*, would be styled a "book," particularly since, like *Troilus*, it is a translation of one of Boccaccio's *opere*. We do not know exactly when Chaucer composed the *Knight's Tale*, nor what manuscript of the *Teseida* he used as the basis for his translation.¹ Yet the *Knight's Tale* is decidedly *not* like *Troilus*, nor is it like the *Teseida*, either in its tone or in its teaching. It is not a "book" in the poet's description of it, but a "tale," *part* of the larger "Book of the Tales of Caunterbury."² It is, to be sure, one of the most formally structured of the tales, carefully divided into scholastic *partes*, and it participates in the tradition of the *roman antique*.³ But by comparison with *Troilus* it is considerably less complex and, as I argue here, less comforting and less resolved in its conclusion.

Chaucer may have made an earlier version of the young Thebans' love story, closer in conception and metrical form to the *Teseida*.⁴ In the *Legend of Good Women* (c. 1384–86?), he claims to have written a "book" detailing "al the love of Palamon and Arcite/ Of Thebes" (F 420), and this work may not be the *Knight's Tale* as we now have it. His *Anelida and Arcite* (c. 1375–79) shows that he had tried at one point to imitate Boccaccio's compositional practices in the *Teseida*, rather than using its amorous story line.⁵ In the *Anelida* – written partly in rhyme royal – he adapts Statius' *Thebaid* (as Boccaccio had), together with the *Teseida*, to establish an historical framework. He then makes up the story of Anelida and the false Arcite (just as Boccaccio had invented the story of Palemone, Arcita, and Emilia), and he uses it to introduce an Ovidian epistle of elegiac complaint modeled on the *Heroides*.⁶ Chaucer clearly recognized Boccaccio's great debt to Ovid as well as to Statius in his *Teseida*, and, in the *Anelida*, he attempted a comparable exercise in creative imitation of both classical *auctores*. As he puts it in his invocation to *Anelida*: "First folowe I Stace, and after him Corynne [i.e., Ovid]" (21).⁷

But by the time he began his *Knight's Tale*, Chaucer had decided to take over the *Teseida's* story line more or less intact, instead of inventing his own. He had also determined to revise Boccaccio's Aristotelian portrait of Teseo in morally conservative directions.⁸ In place of the grave measures of rhyme royal that heighten the tone of his *Troilus* (and imitate Boccaccio's *ottava rima*), he chose the "riding rhyme" of the heroic couplet. In this he preferred the discursive rhythms of the French *romans antiques* over the greater formality of the Italian. In addition, he rejected Boccaccio's practice, chiefly in the glosses for his *Teseida*, of christianizing his matter. Chaucer makes his *Knight's Tale* rigorously true to its character as a translation of the classical strictly *pagan* past. His Knight-teller explicitly refuses to speculate on the life of Arcite's spirit after death, as if to stress the poet's interest in representing an authentically ancient vision of human life and worldly virtue. It is impossible to know whether Chaucer wrote the *Knight's Tale* before or after he had composed his *Troilus*. What is clear is that in the *Knight's Tale* he reworked the *Teseida* to exclude any hint of Christian spiritual transcendence. Furthermore, as he began to compose, he seems to have looked first not to Boccaccio's poem but to Statius' Latin *Thebaid* as a direct source for materials as well as formal and thematic ideas. The Latin epigraph from Book XII of the *Thebaid* that precedes the *Knight's Tale* in many of the manuscripts signals this dependence.⁹ In this regard, the epigraph is not merely decorative or pedantic. It calls attention to the fact that Chaucer begins his narrative proper not simply with Theseus' triumphant conquest of the Amazons (as Boccaccio had) but also with the overwhelmingly sad, darkened world of Statius' widows. Like the last book of the *Thebaid*, the first movement of the *Knight's Tale* underscores the dark side of victory, bringing triumph into intimate contact with the losses orchestrated by Lady Fortune.¹⁰

Few critics in the last several decades have failed to acknowledge that the *Knight's Tale* is difficult, and some of them have called it a partial failure. As Elizabeth Salter wrote of it: "The *Knight's Tale*, at its most remarkable, is an uneven work of 'sad lucidity,' presenting a view of a world in which there is 'nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain,' and expressing best not the great orthodoxies of medieval faith, but the stubborn truths of human experience."¹¹ Salter bases her assessment on a premise well justified by the history of the *roman antique* from the twelfth century on – that there should be a "correlation" between the "power of the human drama" and the "power of the philosophical solution." As we have seen, the French and Italian poems to which Chaucer turned in making the *Knight's Tale* – but particularly the French *romans antiques* – likewise detail the uncertain, circumstantial conflicts of the Thebans, Trojans, and Greeks at war. But

they also insist on just the correlation Salter expected between narrative adventures and moral significance. *Merveilles* and *aventures* are more or less neatly explained as matters not only of Fortune and destiny but also of individual responsibility and divine vengeance or Providence.

As I take up the *Knight's Tale* in this chapter, I want to consider anew precisely how Chaucer balances (or deliberately avoids balancing) the *aventures* he dramatizes against his moral or philosophical *sen*. In doing so, I also want to reopen the question of the poem's specific philosophical basis. Like Benoît de Sainte-Maure and Boccaccio, Chaucer turned to classical and medieval academic teaching on worldly virtue in developing his characters and his moral argument. But his ethical program in the *Knight's Tale* differs significantly both from his French forebear's and from Boccaccio's in the *Teseida*. It is more concentrated and rigorous than Benoît's in *Troie* and substantially less optimistic than Boccaccio's in the *Teseida*.

Within a tale formally divided into *partes*, Chaucer composed what at first appears to be a "sort of poetic pageant," as Charles Muscatine has put it, expressing "the tenor of the noble life, the pomp and ceremony, the dignity and power, and particularly the repose and assurance with which the exponent of nobility invokes order."¹² As Muscatine and others have fully recognized, however, these appearances of order and power are opposed at every turn in the *Knight's Tale* by the countervailing forces of chaos, disorder, passion, and destruction.¹³ Here I want to examine how Chaucer assimilates just these forces of inexplicable disorder to narrativity itself, identifying in them the necessary stuff of all human experience, whether in literature or in life. Chaucer's adventures and miracles in the *Knight's Tale*, unlike Boccaccio's, do not fully yield their *sen* to the pressure of a philosophical poet, or a glossator in the margins, or a hero who has soared, immortal, to the heavenly spheres. In his *Tale*, Chaucer takes notions of adventure and the marvelous or the miraculous inherited from Benoît de Sainte-Maure and, to a lesser extent, Boccaccio, and he redefines them as the radical, irreducible basis for his acts of *conjointure* and storial continuation.¹⁴

The adventures which constitute the narrative foundation of the *Knight's Tale* are coterminous in Chaucer's formal and philosophical argument with the inexplicable vagaries, fortunes, and surprises of human history, both for good and ill. Moreover, these adventures and marvels are the poem's principal, ultimately untranslatable, impenetrable subject, both for the characters in the fiction and for the readers who enter into its fabric. Neither the characters, nor the Knight as teller, nor the audience can arrive *through the text*, *by way of* its adventures and miracles or the explanations

given for them at transcendent truth or a fully comforting explanation for the poem's (and the world's) largely painful events.

Chaucer, like his most illustrious French and Italian forebears in the tradition of the *roman antique*, uses adventures and marvels as a key device in posing hypothetical questions of moral value.¹⁵ But unlike them he deliberately refuses to provide more than provisional, limited solutions to the problems of causality posed by the chance happenings that form the foundation for his *Tale*. He raises his (and our) questions about all of life's adventures in such a way that they have more than local, circumstantial significance specific to the ancient story. Though we may wish to set aside Palamon and Arcite's large queries about life as puerile or pagan, they are nonetheless questions to which neither we nor the *Knight's Tale* can claim absolute answers without resorting to extratextual Judaeo-Christian revelation. "What is this world?" we remember Arcite asks, "What asketh men to have?/ Now with his love, now in his colde grave/ Allone, withouten any compaignye" (I.2777-79). "What governance is in this prescience," demands an anguished young Palamon, "That gilteles tormenteth innocence?" (I.1313-14).

If Fortune and *aventure* present a pattern of unceasing change as the very ground of narrativity in the *Knight's Tale*, Chaucer provides an exemplary, if fragile, individual counter-force for stability in the character and conduct of Theseus. The first dramatized episode of the tale proper – Theseus' encounter with the Argive widows – emphatically articulates the poem's key juxtaposition.¹⁶ As I argued in chapter 5, Boccaccio celebrates the Aristotelian system of the virtues in his *Teseida*, opposing Teseo's noble behavior to the extreme (and therefore vicious) conduct of the two young lovers. Moreover, following Aristotle and his later medieval political interpreters, including Aegidius Romanus, the Italian poet demonstrates through his fiction that the virtues practiced by Teseo are a principal source of human perfection, even yielding a kind of earthly beatitude. By contrast, as I argue in this chapter, Chaucer replaces Boccaccio's Aristotelian system with the less optimistic Ciceronian and Senecan system that had, until the mid-thirteenth century, typically informed medieval treatises on virtue as well as guidebooks for princes. Within this system, the moral virtues are specifically intended to counter not their opposing vices but the power of "Fortune and hire false wheel,/ That noon estaat assureth to be weel" (I.925-26).

Chaucer's connections with the Roman Stoic tradition, and particularly with Seneca, have not gone unnoticed. In his own time, Eustache Deschamps complimented his English friend by calling him a "second Seneca." And in recent years, J.D. Burnley has demonstrated the

importance particularly of Seneca's *De clementia* for Chaucer's treatment of kings and tyrants in his poetry.¹⁷ Alastair Minnis, moreover, has identified Duke Theseus as "a paragon of ethical and political virtue."¹⁸ But no one, as far as I know, has yet observed that the English poet systematically reworked the character of Boccaccio's Teseo, deliberately replacing his Aristotelian virtues with the moral virtues outlined in Stoic and pseudo-Stoic treatises and with a generally Stoic view of the mortal world as the domain of Fortune, time, passionate desire, pain, and *aventure*. The battle between the virtues and Fortune in the pagan world of the *Knight's Tale*, unlike the battle between the Aristotelian virtues and vices in the *Teseida*, does not issue in the unequivocal triumph of human perfection. While Theseus does achieve a somber, rational, social harmony at the end of Chaucer's poem, it is a tenuous harmony, always subject to further change, further *aventure*. What limited hope there is for ordering the essential drive towards chaos in the world bounded by the *Knight's Tale* lies in the steady practice of princely virtue by Theseus, the philosophical wisdom of his father Egeus, and the moral and political promise of the duke's youthful protégé, the chastened Palamon.

Chaucer's Knight as the teller of the tale, like Boccaccio's *autore* in the *Teseida*, mirrors the character of his hero. If, in Boccaccio's argument in the *Teseida*, the poet shares, in his own realm, the eloquent wisdom of the Aristotelian prince, Chaucer's very different narrator in the *Knight's Tale* mirrors the Stoic virtues and practical good sense of Theseus. To be sure, the Chaucerian Knight's form of Stoicism is homely and even naive at times – perhaps adjusted to meet the demands of the Canterbury game. Yet the contours of his ethical stance – his steady awareness of the ineluctable passage of time, his philosophical acceptance of the uncertainties of life, his humor, his submission to the laws of Nature, and his detachment – conform, however humbly, to classical and medieval Stoic teaching on virtuous behavior in relation to the way of the world. Chaucer's study of virtue in the *Knight's Tale* – like the teachings of Cicero and Seneca – addresses the problem of achieving social and political order in the face of almost insurmountable odds in the mortal world. The virtue he most fully celebrates in Theseus and his Knight-teller – justice in several of its principal parts (*veracitas*, *reverentia*, *beneficentia*, and *clementia* or *misericordia*) – has to do with maintaining the bonds of human society. Justice, together with the other cardinal virtues, prudence, fortitude, and temperance, comprise those virtues regarded by medieval theorists as belonging to the lower part of reason and to life in this world. They are, therefore, those virtues available to pagans without the light of Christianity.¹⁹ While Boccaccio's Aristotelian virtues point souls to the *summum bonum* as Arcita's

fate in the *Teseida* amply demonstrates, Chaucer's Stoic virtues provide only a human, rational means of responding nobly to the constant ravages of passion (including Ovidian *fine amor*), time, change, Fortune, and death. From the beginning of the *Knight's Tale* to its end, Theseus works to bring justice, mercy, and good order to those he rules. And, in a humbler way, the Knight as teller orders his matter according to the rules of Harry Bailly's game and his own fundamentally Stoic sense of the world.

ADVENTURE, CAS, PASSION, AND NARRATIVITY IN THE
KNIGHT'S TALE

The linking of episodes *par aventure* is of the essence of medieval romance construction. It is what gives not only the *romans antiques* but also Arthurian romances their characteristic leisurely structure and sense of mystery. As Morton Bloomfield pointed out some time ago:

The differentiating quality of romance episode [that is, what distinguishes it from epic episode] . . . is . . . the absence of rationality and its replacement by irrational or unmotivated episodes. It is these episodes which are properly adventures and which give romance their particular flavor from the point of view of narrative technique . . . The irrational episode, the adventure, when properly used, reinforces the sense of mystery which is often inherent in the subject matter of the tale.²⁰

One might conclude that Chaucer was following convention in his handling of *aventure*, structuring his *Knight's Tale* along thoroughly traditional lines, taking his hint to some extent from Boccaccio, and more from the habits of the French romancers. But to say this would be to simplify the case.

Benoît de Sainte-Maure and, to a much greater degree, Boccaccio attempt to explain the causes behind the adventures they record. By contrast, Chaucer typically *insists* on the lack of causal motivation in the *Knight's Tale*. Indeed, he draws attention to the processes of Fortune, chance, and unchecked passion as a way of defining the nature of unredeemed history in the fallen world. As they are presented by the narrator in the *Knight's Tale*, Fortune and *aventure* are not merely fictions or narrative tools but ontological facts of the human condition against which only a few defenses suffice, and even these prove to be effective only temporarily and partially.

More than Benoît de Sainte-Maure, and much more than Boccaccio, Chaucer uses *aventure* as the mainspring of most, though not quite all, of the story's action. The word *aventure* occurs in the *Tale* eleven times, while in the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole it appears only thirty times.²¹ Moreover,

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adventure, in Chaucer's formal argument, coincides with other significant words and phrases – "sodeyn hap," "hit bifel," "miracle," "Fortune" – and these terms operate powerfully, usually as clusters, in forming our sense of discrete episodes. In the *Tale*, most of the major actions are explicitly identified at their start as chance happenings, and the narrator's word choices as well as those of the other characters consistently emphasize their adventitious nature. There are important exceptions, both apparent and real, to this narrative pattern in which things happen "by *aventure*," and we shall turn to them later. But for the most part, as Jill Mann has observed, Fortune or chance enables and governs the story's events.²² The world of chance and change circumscribed by the *Knight's Tale* is, in fact, very like the one described by Seneca in his well-known Consolation to Marcia:

We have come into the realm of Fortune, and harsh and invincible is her power; we must suffer things deserved and undeserved just as she wills. With violence, insult, and cruelty she will maltreat our bodies. Some she will burn with fire, applied, it may be, to punish, it may be, to heal; some she will bind with chains, committing the power now to an enemy, now to a fellow-countryman; some she will toss naked upon the fickle sea, and, when their struggle with the waves is over, she will not even cast them up on the sand or the shore, but will hide them away in the maw of some huge monster; others, when she has worn them down with divers diseases, she will long keep suspended between life and death. Like a mistress that is changeable and passionate and neglectful of her slaves, she will be capricious in both her rewards and her punishments.²³

It is just such a vision of human life in the world that underlies the series of adventures confronted by all of Chaucer's characters in the *Knight's Tale*.

In the poem's first dramatic episode, Theseus, fresh from his victory over the Amazons and his triumphant marriage to Ypolita, encounters the Argive widows, whom he sees as if by chance "as he caste his eye aside" (1.896). Their spokeswoman explains the cause of their grief:

Thanked be Fortune and hire false wheel,
That noon estaat assureth to be weel. (1.925–26)

Here, as Chaucer redistributes the *matere* of Boccaccio's *Teseida* and Statius' *Thebaid*, he gives the familiar icon of the wheel of Fortune pride of place in his narrative construction. As Capaneus' widow records the devastations that have overwhelmed her in the loss of her husband and Creon's refusal to bury the dead, she underscores Lady Fortune's impersonal rather than causally explicable or retributive character. Most importantly, she points out that Fortune's whims extend equally to every "estaat." This unsettling *sen*, given to Fortune's wheel in the fiction's important first scene, is a

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significant one, and it will reverberate ominously in several different contexts through the whole course of the narrative.

After Theseus' conquest of Creon, the tale is explicitly propelled forward by the chance discovery of Arcite and Palamon lying nearly dead in a heap of warriors:

And so bifel that in the taas they founde,
Thurgh-girt with many a grevous bloody wounde,
Two yonge knyghtes liggyng by and by.

(I.1009-11; my emphasis)

Chance likewise governs the whole compelling love interest of the poem:

This passeth yeer by yeer and day by day,
Til it fil ones, in a morwe of May,
That Emelye, . . .
. . . was arisen and al redy dight.

(I.1033-41; my emphasis)

So slight a signal as "til it fil ones" might not call attention to itself were it not that this formula or variations of it reappear regularly as frames for most of the other significant actions of the poem. In most cases, these frames replace careful, hypotactic, causal explanations of motivation and action in the *Teseida*.

"*And so bifel, by aventure or cas*" (I.1074) that Palamon first spies Emelye through his prison window. "It happed on a day" (I.1189) that Perotheus comes to Athens to visit his friend, Theseus. "Were it by aventure or destyne" (1465), Palamon manages to escape from prison. "Ther as by aventure" (1516), he is hiding in a grove when he happens to overhear Arcite lamenting his fate. "Destinee" (1663) brings Theseus by coincidence to the grove where the two young knights are fighting up to their ankles in blood. When Arcite falls from his horse after the great joust, the narrator first describes the event as a "myracle" (2675), and then suggests that Theseus would call the fall an "aventure" (2703).

In Chaucer's treatment of unmotivated, *chance* events, these happenings, these adventures actually cause the action and therefore the story to continue. At several points, the poem appears to arrive at closure controlled by human agency. After Theseus has consigned Arcite and Palamon to prison forever, he settles down to enjoy his laurel crown and live "in joye and in honour/ Terme of his lyf" (I.1028-29). "What nedeth wordes mo?" the narrator rightly asks. But, as everyone knows, more words follow, precisely because "it fil ones." Emelye appears on the scene to awaken the young prisoners' imagination and thereby open the tale to

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continuation. Again, just after the practical Arcite chides Palamon for supposing that either of them will ever have Emelye ("thou and I be dampned to prisoun/ *Perpetuelly*" [1175-76]), Perotheus arrives ("it happed on a day") and asks for Arcite's release. Theseus, sitting in his window "as he were a god in trone" (2529), to oversee the great joust, solemnly announces that there will be no fight to the death. In his scheme, the battle will issue in rational human harmony and a happy marriage for the victor. Yet, by a "myracle," as the narrator calls it, an "aventure" as Theseus treats it, Arcite falls from his horse and subsequently dies, leading to further unexpected action, and a concluding, modified sense of harmony.

I want to pause over this fateful, climactic "myracle" in the poem to compare it with Boccaccio's treatment of the same event because the comparison brings into sharp focus Chaucer's handling of this as well as most other episodes in the poem. In the *Teseida*, the Italian poet prefaces Book ix and his account of Arcita's fall with a *sonetto* in which he declares:

*Dimostra il nono libro apertamente
perché e come Arcita vincitore
sotto al caval cadesse.*

(ix, sonetto, 1-3; my emphasis)

(*The ninth book openly demonstrates why and how Arcita the victor fell under the horse.*)

In this gesture, characteristic of his art in the *Teseida*, the *autore* describes his essentially philosophical interest. His is a kind of poetry concerned with explaining, albeit indirectly under the cloud of poetry, the *true* causes of things. To confirm the nature of this art, both the poem's narrator and the glossator in the margins systematically provide explanatory formulas through which we may grasp Arcita's fall and subsequent death philosophically and even theologically.

In the first line of Book ix, Boccaccio's narrator styles the event "il doloroso fato," while the glossator simultaneously explains the "poetic" phrase in Christian terms: "Cioè," he says, "la dolorosa provedenza di Dio per Arcita" (that is, the sorrowful providence of God for Arcita).²⁴ The narrator also links the victor's fall to Fortune's special interest in subduing the proud:

. . . allor è l'uom più vicino al cadere
e vie più grieve cade, quanto ad alto
è più montato sovra il verde smalto. (ix.1.6-8)

(for a man is closer to his fall and falls all the more heavily when he has climbed higher above the enameled green.)

Finally, the glossator offers a rational description of the fall, thereby laying bare the narrator's *finzione* in a naturalistic way. While the *poem* says that the gods are responsible for the tragic event, the commentator in the margin removes the mythological covering. "Everyone knows," he says, that "animals shy at some frightening object that they seem to see, but what they see, or what they think they see, no one knows."²⁵

Boccaccio's elaborate series of explanations – theological, philosophical, natural – demystifies the fall, neatly placing it within the larger context of values Boccaccio intended to celebrate in the *Teseida*. Later on, at the beginning of Book xi, the Italian poet definitively removes the sting of death by juxtaposing it with Arcita's triumphant ascent to the heavenly spheres. From his celestial perspective, the beatified hero surveys with amusement all the false beauty of the world to which he had once been attached, including his earthly pleasures.

In striking and, I think, pointed contrast, when Chaucer's Knight looks upon the same disastrous foundering of Arcite's horse, he renders the event with a very different kind of art. In the Knight's introductory description of Arcite's fall, he places the accident surprisingly under the rubric of wonder:

But herkneth me, and stynteth noyse a lite,
Which a *myracle* ther bifel anon.

(I.2674–75; my emphasis)

The word *myracle*, which corresponds roughly to Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *merveille* in the *Roman de Troie*, calls attention to itself not least because it occurs only twice in the tale.²⁶ In both cases, the Knight uses the word in a sense like the one given to it in Chaucer's translation of Boethius' *De consolacione philosophiae*. There, in Book iv, prose 6, a troubled Boethius chooses *miracle* and its synonym *wonder* to describe his ignorance of the causes of many events in nature: "For this miracle or this wonder trowbleth me ryght gretly."²⁷ Then Lady Philosophy explains to him the great difficulty for humans in understanding causality in the world. As she observes: "[T]he matere of it is swich, that whan o doute is determined and kut away, ther waxen othere doutes withoute nombre, ryght as the hevedes wexen of Idre."²⁸ For the most part, however (so Philosophy's argument goes), humans stumble in wonderment over just the questions that puzzle Boethius most – questions "of the symplicite of the purveaunce of God, and of the ordre of destyne, and of sodeyn hap, and of the knowynge and predestinacioun devyne, and of the liberte of fre wil." For those who "known [the causes of things] nat," events without clear causes are "lik a mervayle or *miracle*" (my emphasis).²⁹ When Chaucer's Knight uses the word *myracle* to describe the "sodeyn hap" of Arcite's fall, he does so in

precisely the Boethian sense of wonderment at an incomprehensible, inexplicable happening. Chaucer's *Tale*, however, unlike Boccaccio's *Teseida*, does not claim to lead us from wonderment to philosophical understanding. Instead of introducing Boethian "strength of wit" as an antidote for fictionalizing imagination, Chaucer leaves us with his Knight's "weak oxen" in the realm of images and an unresolved series of responses to the surprise event.

The Knight-teller's first explanation for the fall is mythological: Pluto, at Saturn's instigation, has sent a "furie infernal" to frighten Arcite's horse. Students and critics alike tend to take this account as the "true" one, accepting it without question. Our habits of suspended disbelief in the environment of fiction, and especially of romance, allow us to accept the agency of gods automatically. Yet, as we have seen, Boccaccio had demythologized the event in a typically Christian, medieval way by means of his marginal gloss. The art of mythologizing belongs, in his view, to the *finzione dei poeti*, and it requires translation. Chaucer, by contrast, prefers to offer competing explanations without establishing any hierarchy among them. The Knight goes on, as if reporting Theseus' reaction, to offer a simple rational explanation for the event.³⁰ Describing the duke's conduct after the accident, he declares, in a somewhat offhand (but characteristically Stoic) comment, "fallyng nys nat but an aventure" (1.2722).

In fact, neither the Knight's nor Theseus' frame provides closure for the essential philosophical question posed by Arcite's fall, "What cause?" As if to underscore the incompleteness of his fiction's framing "explanations," Chaucer's Knight proceeds to give us a stark naturalistic description of the fall's consequence as Arcite dies, step by step, before our mind's eye (1.2743-60). The English teller's unromantic, clinical description of death-in-process is not in Boccaccio. It presents an individual mortal man's inevitable final, irrational, inexplicable *aventure* unsoftened by philosophy or theology. Moreover, as Chaucer's Arcite himself comments on his impending death, he does so not with resignation and understanding (as Boccaccio's Arcita had) but with puzzlement: "What is this world? What asketh men to have?" (1.2777) In spite of Theseus' famous and much studied "First Mover" speech, Arcite's deep question about the point of life as well as our puzzlement about the justice of his fall remain active at the fiction's end, not fully settled either by oratory or ceremony.

But now we must consider two important moments in the poem which seem, in the Knight's account of them, not to conform to the dominant compositional pattern in which chance or *aventure* causes narrative action (and history). In the first instance, Arcite decides to return to Athens

because of a dream. In it, Mercury promises that the young lover's return will bring an end to his woes (1.1391-92). In the second instance, Theseus magnanimously forgives Palamon and Arcite, whom he discovers by "destinee," fighting in a grove. Each of these narrative segments contributes in a different way to the poet's argument concerning human limits in relation to the force of destructive *aventure*. The first episode represents only an *apparent* deviation from the dominant scheme in which action is propelled forward by surprising, generally destructive chance and change. The second, on the other hand, offers an actual deviation, one which is part of a second pattern in the poem, demonstrating the countervailing power of virtue to control passion and reform the negative energies of mortal *aventure*.

Let us look first at the cause for Arcita/Arcite's return to Athens. In Boccaccio's account, a realistic situation motivates the young lover. He encounters sailors from Athens who give him news of Emilia and invite him to sail home with them. By contrast, Chaucer introduces a dream of Mercury as the "cause" for Arcite's return, and he thereby encloses the event in a cloud of mystery. As many medieval readers would have known, and as Boccaccio's *Teseida* makes clear, Mercury is a psychopomp, "son of Proserpina, to whom it belongs to carry souls out of their bodies" (*Teseida*, x.94.1-3). In the *Teseida*, it will be recalled, Arcita himself actually provides this mythographic information as he prays to Mercury on the verge of his own demise. With an exemplary self-knowledge and acceptance of his death, he performs obsequies to the deity he most needs in his last hour. Chaucer's Mercury, on the other hand, enters the narrative not, it would appear, to lead Arcite to death, but rather, as he explicitly says, to end the young Trojan's "wo" by encouraging his return to Athens and to Emelye.

In fact, however, Chaucer's figure of Mercury as well as the dream in which he appears introduce powerful elements of ambiguity and duplicity. Mercury, in the English poet's presentation of him, is preeminently a teller of tales, the trickster who beguiled Argos into sleep by telling him stories and then slew him. He was, the Knight tells us specifically, "[a]rrayed . . . [a]s he was whan that Argus took his sleep" (1.1389-90). This allusive description of the "wynged god" in his aspect as a wily murderer hovers lightly but ominously over Mercury's visionary advice to Arcite. Bidding him to "be murie," the trickster-god tells him to return to Athens where "is thee shapen of thy wo an ende" (1.1386, 1391-92).

Once again, though in a different form, the problem of understanding causality presents itself, not only to the characters in the fiction but also to the audience. As the tale will eventually reveal, the end of Arcite's woe promised by the dream of Mercury is not, as we and Arcite might have

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hoped and expected, stable earthly love, but rather death. While the dream, and Mercury's "tale" within it, *seem* to bode well for the young Theban, in fact they set in motion the events leading to his mortal accident. Even more than the neutral phrase "hit bifel" as a way of initiating action, this dream calls attention in retrospect to the generally ominous, negative character of *aventure* in the fiction as a whole. We observe too the impossibility, for Arcite and also for ourselves *at this point* in the narrative, of interpreting such a dream reflectively or correctly. Time, Arcite's passion, and our desire as readers for further action in the fiction press us quickly forward.

The second (and actual) deviation from the dominant pattern of *aventure* occurs when Theseus happens upon the scene of the two young knights fighting like wild beasts in a grove for the sake of their lady. In this episode, as Theseus encounters Arcite and Palamon, the entropic, potentially destructive character of *aventure per se* seems very likely to bring the tale to an end. The two young knights, whose several adventures, together with their passionate desire, have led them to the grove, now meet "by aventure," and they agree to settle their feud by means of a battle to the death. To be sure, the "bestial" event is ameliorated by Arcite's *gentillesse* – he brings Palamon supper and bedding for the night as well as arms for the fight. But the two, brought together by chance, driven by their passion, aim to kill each other. If one of the knights is killed, the love story with all its *aventures* will obviously end, not in fulfillment but in the finality of death.

As Chaucer opens the Knight's fiction out to yet another beginning, he follows Boccaccio's narrative line, but he also works a rather elaborate change on the Italian poet's argument. In the *Teseida*, the noble duke arrives on the scene of the two battling knights by what the poet identifies as simple coincidence. Emilia, who has gone out hunting with Teseo and a number of others, is the first to see the two knights, and she reports their presence to the prince. At this important moment of transition, Boccaccio quite realistically allows coincidence and *aventure* to enter into his narrative fabric without requiring deeper causal explanations:

Ma come noi veggiam venire in ora
cosa che in mille anni non avvene,
così avvenne veramente allora
che Teseo con Emilia d'Attene
uscir con molti in compagnia di fora. (v.77.1–5)

(Just as we see coming to pass in a moment something that has not happened in a thousand years, so it then happened, truly, that Teseo came out from Athens with Emilia and many others in a company.)

This naturalistic explanation of the encounter requires no special leap of faith on the reader's part. It is fully credible as a simple coincidence, and especially so since the poet has already demonstrated that whenever a higher level of exegesis is warranted, he will explain the cause of an event.

In striking contrast, Chaucer's Knight struggles in an uncharacteristic way *in this instance* to impose a deeper philosophical rationale on the surprising *conjointure*. He invokes destiny as the agent of Providence to explain what appears to him a remarkable conjunction:

The destinee, ministre general,
That executeth in the world over al
The purveiaunce that God hath seyn biforn,
So strong it is that, though the world had sworn
The contrarie of a thyng by ye or nay,
Yet somtyme it shal fallen on a day
That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand year. (I.1663–69)

In the Knight's unexpectedly technical commentary, "purveiaunce" is defined as God's vision of things, which, when it is implemented in the world, is called "destinee."

Both the Knight's language and his conception of Providence and destiny are borrowed from Boethius' *De consolazione philosophiae*. In his mention of divine Providence – one of only three appearances of the term in the whole narrative³¹ – the Knight alludes to a comprehensive order of things beyond the processes of *aventure* and change within the tale. The allusion is suggestive, certainly, but the narrator does not dwell on the nature of divine Providence, nor does he explain at any other point how it might operate in the world of the *Knight's Tale*. Instead, he goes on to link Theseus with *destinee* – "This mene I now by myghty Theseus" (I.1673). Theseus is not God and his link with destiny is tenuous. The duke is, after all, limited by the span of his life and the strength of his virtue. Nonetheless, the link is crucial to the Knight's pagan Stoic study of the contest between human virtue and the unrelenting pressures of *aventure*.

When Chaucer yokes Theseus with the power of *destinee*, he does so to raise pointed questions about the relationship between the virtuous duke and the conquest of *aventure*. Providence, like the "miracle" of Arcite's fall, and like the fate of Arcite's soul after death, remains a mystery beyond the boundaries of the Knight's pagan fiction. Yet, by linking Theseus and destiny, Chaucer invites us to consider just how far, and in what precise respects, his noble pagan character does direct or at least help to reshape the fortunes of his subjects and the course of events. It is not without significance that the Knight's meditation on Theseus as a figure of *destinee*

initiates a long, formal pause or parenthesis in the forward thrust of *aventure* in the fiction. The whole third part of the *Knight's Tale* turns on the slow, elaborate description of the amphitheater and the temples Theseus causes to be built for his great tournament. Through the forms of architecture, art, and legitimate play, the duke aims to bring rational harmony to the young knights' irrational passions. And his effort, like Chaucer's in the poem, is successful, but only up to a point.³²

The delicate, tenuous balance between narrative and *sen* in the *Tale* as a whole turns on an interplay between the destructive motions of Fortune (linked to fiction-making, beginnings, endings, and narrative action) and Theseus' noble virtue (a source of temporary control over time and of fragile triumphs over passion, chance, and change). As the *Tale* amply demonstrates, this balance is ever in danger of being undone by malevolence and death, epitomized, in the fiction, by Saturn.³³ Yet the duke's virtue is the best, in the poem's argument, that can be hoped for, from a strictly human point of view, within the bounds of the mortal world. And Chaucer figures that "best" in his philosophically rigorous delineation of Theseus as a model not of Aristotelian but of Stoic virtue.

THE CHARACTER OF THESEUS AND THE FRAGILE TRIUMPHS OF VIRTUE

Few critics have failed to praise Theseus for his moral goodness. As Piero Boitani observes, the Athenian duke has "all the good qualities of an ideal figure. We are told several times that he is noble, wise, just, chivalrous, 'gentil,' merciful."³⁴ And Alsatair Minnis says of him that he is "the most perfect of Chaucer's good pagans."³⁵ What scholars have not recognized, however, is that the English poet draws his figure of Theseus not casually with a general sense of princely virtue but systematically according to paradigms of the moral virtues developed by those centrally important medieval theorists who turned to Cicero and Seneca for inspiration. If we study the Knight's Theseus within the context of some of the best-known later-medieval treatises on the virtues, we find that he mirrors with remarkable precision the lineaments of medievalized Stoic doctrine. Above all, in his practice of virtue he serves an essential, ameliorative role in relation to the unavoidable devastations of *aventure*.

As A.C. Spearing has argued, "a major advantage of the pagan setting [for the *Knight's Tale*] was that it enabled [Chaucer] to enter imaginatively into questions about the order of the world that would not have been appropriate within a Christian world-view."³⁶ Another advantage the English poet found in choosing the tradition of the *roman antique* was that it

allowed him to develop a “pagan” moral design for the *Knight's Tale*. Through this design, inspired directly or indirectly by the classical *auctores*, he provides his readers (perhaps including his king) with one key basis for evaluating their own conduct. Friar Lorens, in his *Somme le roi* (1279), had praised the pagans’ practice of the four moral virtues prescribed by the “ancient philosophers” in a way that complements Chaucer’s study of the same virtues. Their standard, he observed, puts the behavior of Christians to shame:³⁷

By these four virtues, says [Plato], man becomes worthy to be governor first of himself, and afterwards of others. In these four virtues the ancient philosophers educated themselves, who despised and overcame the whole world in order to acquire virtue and wisdom, and on account of this they were called philosophers, for a philosopher values nothing so much as love of wisdom.

Oh, God! How it ought to astonish us that those who were pagans and without the scripture, who knew nothing about the true grace of God nor about the Holy Spirit, nonetheless climbed the mountain of perfection of life by the strength of their own virtue, and they never condescended to glance toward the world.

And we who are Christians, and have the true faith, and know the commandments of God, and have the grace of the Holy Spirit, if we want it – who could gain more in a day than those [pagans] could in an entire year – we live like pigs here below in the mud of this world, and we fish for frogs with the avaricious in the sea of worldly delights. On this account, Saint Paul says that the pagans who are without the law and make the law will, on the day of Judgment, judge us, who have the law and never use it.³⁸

In a comparable way, the virtues practiced by Chaucer’s pagan Theseus seem designed to comment on the behavior of many a “Christian” in the poet’s late-fourteenth-century audience. The noble duke’s example helps to measure the many human inequities and disharmonies in the “felawship” or *societas* both of the poem and of the English court under Richard II.³⁹

It may not be possible to identify exactly which treatise or treatises Chaucer followed in formulating his Theseus, though several present themselves as likely candidates: the pseudo-Senecan *De quatuor virtutibus*;⁴⁰ Peter Abelard’s *Dialogus inter philosophum, Judaeum, et Christianum*;⁴¹ Alain de Lille’s treatises on the virtues and vices;⁴² the very influential twelfth-century *Moralium dogma philosophorum* attributed to Walter of Chatillon;⁴³ William Peraldus’ *De virtutibus*;⁴⁴ Friar Lorens’ *Somme le roi*;⁴⁵ Brunetto Latini’s *Li livres dou tresor*.⁴⁶ In addition, Chaucer may have had in mind the most important classical sources for these treatises – Cicero’s *De officiis* and Seneca’s several moral letters and essays, including his *De clementia*. Whether he drew upon one or several sources, Chaucer, like his illustrious predecessors in the tradition of the *roman antique*, uses his fiction to offer a classically inspired, rigorously developed moral program to comment on and guide the conduct of his contemporaries.

The *Knight's Tale* and the *roman antique*

The first dramatic scene of the *Knight's Tale* initiates the English poet's study of Theseus' exemplary moral character. Boccaccio had located this scene in Book II of his *Teseida*, after recording Teseo's conquest of the Amazons. And he had used it to study the Aristotelian virtue of *mansuetudo* in his titular hero, linking it with *magnanimitas*, that habit by which the prince seeks honor through the performance of great retributive deeds. When Chaucer reconfigures the scene as the all-important *first* action of his narrative (and of the *Canterbury Tales* proper), he begins by emphatically juxtaposing prosperity and adversity – Fortune's two great temptations as the Stoics style them. The sharply defined contrast between pointed metonymies – the "victorie and melodie" of Theseus' triumphant procession and the weeping of the destitute widows – provides the ground melody against which Chaucer plays the noble duke's acts of virtue in the poem. And these acts conform in their design to Ciceronian and medieval definitions of natural *iustitia* as it is supported by *fortitudo* and *temperantia*.⁴⁷

Justice, according to Cicero in his *De officiis*, is the "most extensive" in application of all the moral virtues, the means by which "the society of men and, as it were, the community of life is contained."⁴⁸ Or, as the twelfth-century *Moralium dogma philosophorum* puts it, "justice is the virtue preserving human society and the life of the community."⁴⁹ Moreover, as the *Moralium* goes on to point out, the virtue of justice "transcends all adversities. No one can be just who fears death, exile, sorrow, [or] destitution or who gives priority to anything contrary to equity."⁵⁰ In the course of the *Knight's Tale*, Theseus and the other characters in the fiction face some or all of outrageous Fortune's slings and arrows – death, exile, sorrow, destitution, inequity. In each case, Theseus, together with his experienced father, Egeus, gives ideal Stoic responses or Stoic explanations, thereby offering instruction to those who observe their conduct and grasp the import of their speeches.

Let us return to the opening dramatic sequence of the *Knight's Tale*. If, as I am suggesting, Chaucer's Theseus enacts in a precise way virtues prescribed by medieval moralists under the influence of classical Stoicism, then we must examine the specific signs of this behavior in the *Tale's* first movement – the duke's procession into Athens, the encounter with the Argive widows, the war against Creon, the burial of the slain kings. In this highly concentrated sequence, Chaucer identifies habits of conduct in Theseus which establish a pattern for all of his subsequent activity in the poem. Advancing towards Athens with his new wife in "glorie" and "honour," responding to the supplications of the women with "hertepitous," swearing his oath to wreak vengeance on the wicked tyrant Creon, doing "grete honour" to the widows after the "obsequies" for their

husbands, he dramatizes in several ways the virtue of Stoic *iustitia* in its two great divisions: *severitas* (punishing injury by means of deserved penalty) and *liberalitas* (the dispensing of beneficence), interestingly translated by Brunetto Latini as "cortoisie."⁵¹

At the beginning of the sequence, Theseus, "in al his wele and in his mooste pride" (1.895) is riding into Athens. He is enjoying well-deserved "honour," because of his conquest of the Amazons and also because of his marriage. In both these acts, he has enhanced the good of his *societas* and he is therefore the just recipient of what the medieval moralists, in their discussions of *iustitia*, called *reverentia* – that is, the kind of honor owed to great personages.⁵² Then, in the midst of the procession, almost by chance, "as he caste his eye aside" (896), he sees the women in black, weeping. He challenges their interruption of his procession (and his well-earned honor), asking whether they envy him his triumph. The eldest of the widows explains their plight. They have been unjustly wronged by the tyrant, Creon. Their royal husbands' bodies lie unburied, fodder for hounds.

Once he has understood their situation, Theseus jumps down from his horse, his "herte pitous" (953), and gathers the women into his arms. Then, he swears an oath as a "trewe knyght" (959) that he will wreak vengeance on Creon who "hadde his deeth ful wel deserved" (964). In this moving, generous act, the duke practices three parts of *iustitia* – *fides* or, as Chaucer's Knight would call it, "trouth," whereby he solemnly promises to carry out a noble deed; *clementia* or *misericordia*, that form of justice by which "the soul is moved by the calamity of the afflicted";⁵³ and *severitas* or *vindicatio* by which "a pestiferous man is removed from the community."⁵⁴ In Theseus' oath "as he was trewe knyght," Chaucer initiates one of the deepest questions about human justice posed in his poem. How does a sacred promise and the subsequent keeping of one's word figure in the good order of society? In his study of Theseus' particular form of *misericordia*, the poet introduces a distinction between the just and noble mercy owed to the unfortunate and another less exalted (less Stoic) form of *pitié* and pathos. The duke's promise of *vindicatio* brings to the fore the issue of just punishment for those who severely disrupt society.

Cicero had accorded the highest value to *fides*. As he puts it in Book I of his *De officiis*:

The foundation of justice . . . is good faith – that is, truth and fidelity to promises and agreements. And therefore we may follow the Stoics . . . and we may accept their statement that "good faith" is so called because what is promised is "made good."⁵⁵

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In the twelfth century, in his *Dialogus inter philosophum, Iudaeum, et Christianum*, Peter Abelard had listed *veracitas* as one of the four principal parts of justice. And he had defined it in Ciceronian terms: "Truth-telling is that virtue by which we, as debtors in making promises, are "zealous in honoring [them]."⁵⁶ In the *Moralium dogma philosophorum*, Cicero's *fides* is placed under that part of *iustitia* (and *liberalitas*) called *religio* as "the virtue which maintains the truth." It is called "*fides*" because "through it what one says [promises in word] will be done."⁵⁷ In the *Knight's Tale*, very shortly after he has sworn his oath, Theseus proves true to his word by killing Creon and conquering the city of Thebes. His battle done, he arranges for the widows to bury their husbands, and then he does them "grete honour" (1.997-99). In this yoking of *fides* with "honour," the duke not only exemplifies the very basis of justice by keeping his word; he also offers the widows what his subjects accord him, namely *reverentia*. Not surprisingly, honor, as a part of justice whereby respect is both received and given, is one of the principal forms by which the "*vinculum societatis humanae*" is maintained, both in the *Knight's Tale* and in medieval moral commentaries on *iustitia*.⁵⁸

If *reverentia*, *fides*, and *vindicatio* all figure importantly in the opening sequence of the *Knight's Tale*, it is arguably *clementia*, accompanied by a certain kind of *misericordia*, that is the most important aspect of *iustitia* modeled by Theseus in the tale's opening scene. In studying noble mercy, Chaucer undoubtedly took his lead from Boccaccio who had located the bereaved widows in the temple of *Clementia*. His presentation of the duke's *pitous herte* and act of mercy seems to depend, however, not so much on Boccaccio as on classical and medieval discourses on mercy and compassion as a division of Stoic *iustitia*. The great warmth of Theseus' response to the widows - "Hym thoughte that his herte wolde breke" (954) - parallels later medieval descriptions of *misericordia*. "*Misericorde*," writes a French translator of the *Moralium dogma philosophorum*, "est une vertuz qui fait le cuer tendre et pitex vers celx qui sont apressé de mesaise . . . Et qui est pitex et plains de misericorde vers le mesaisié, il li membre de soi."⁵⁹ Those who practice compassion "do not consider anything human foreign to them" and "they regard both the successes and suffering of others their own."⁶⁰ Moreover, as the moralists are quick to point out, following Cicero, "it is difficult to take on the cares of others."⁶¹ Theseus, in his spontaneous act of compassion towards the widows, not only embraces them, thereby sharing their condition sympathetically; he also promises to help them insofar as he can.

In addition, in his construction of Theseus, Chaucer tends to make a Senecan distinction not very common in medieval treatises on virtue

between Theseus' form of compassionate justice and another less high-minded kind of *pitee*.⁶² This latter, weaker form of pity the widows' bitter tears seem to represent. The weeping widows beg Theseus to let their "sorwe synken in [his] herte" (951). And the Knight as narrator suggests that their plea and their plight are "routhe for to seen and heere" (1.914): that is, the widows may inspire responsive tears of sympathy or fear in the ordinary reader. Theseus too might well have given himself over to weeping *with* the women, particularly since they are reporting a deed of Fortune and of tyrannical cruelty enacted against noblemen like himself.

But Theseus does not fall into tears. Instead, he prepares himself for action to right a patent wrong, insofar as the wrong *can* be amended. In this, the Athenian duke seems to be enacting Seneca's observation that the practitioner of true Stoic *clementia* will "come to the aid of those who weep, but without weeping with them."⁶³ We might pass over the poet's distinction between the weeping women and Theseus were it not that Chaucer makes a similar distinction again in two later pathetic scenes. By their configuration they allow the possibility of several different kinds of reaction at once. The first scene concerns Theseus' recognition of Palamon and Arcite in the grove; the second records Arcite's death and its immediate aftermath. In each instance, Theseus' response is distinguished from those of women, old folk, and folk of "tender years." While those who are weak tend to weep, Theseus habitually seeks a means of ameliorating the situation. This is not to say that Theseus never weeps, for he does give in to tears after he has dressed Arcite's corpse in gold cloth in preparation for his funeral (1.2878). But, when he cries, he does so in moderation and in private. In the first case, because "pitee renneth soone in gentil herte" (1.1716), the duke gives up his justified anger, forgives the two young knights, and immediately sets about arranging for the great lists. In the second case, just after Arcite's death, Emelye shrieks, Palamon howls, and "the sorwes and the teeres/ Of olde folk and folk of tendre yeeres" are "infinite" (1.2827-28). By contrast, Theseus, in the Knight's account, though he is not "glad," nonetheless does not break down. Instead, he turns to his father, Egeus, for advice.

The discourse of old Egeus, "who knew this worldes transmutacioun," is borrowed in part from Teseo's Senecan consolation in the *Teseida*. What Chaucer adds to it has been linked, though not very securely, to a number of possible sources.⁶⁴ It has also been treated somewhat dismissively as one of the "many 'consolations' . . . offered . . . in response to Arcite's death . . . not really philosophy so much as a kind of medley of what men say on such occasions."⁶⁵ In fact, however, Egeus' speech can be shown to participate in the same Stoic tradition that supports Theseus' virtue. It contributes to

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what A.C. Spearing has rightly called Chaucer's "vision of pagan antiquity" and his "conception of pagan philosophy."⁶⁶ Indeed the specifically Stoic moral contours of the *Knight's Tale*, as I have been outlining them, support Spearing's position in ways he may not have suspected.⁶⁷

Egeus first points out, following Boccaccio's Teseo, that every one must die:

Right as ther dyed nevere man, . . .
That he ne lyvede in erthe in some degree,
Right so ther lyvede never man . . .
In al this world, that som tyme he ne deyde.

Then he speaks a Chaucerian addition:

This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo,
And we been pilgrymes, passynge to and fro.
Deeth is an ende of every worldly soore. (l.2843-49)

Chaucer may have embellished Boccaccio's classically inspired consolatory rhetoric by turning either to Seneca himself or to the very well-known pseudo-Senecan *De remediis fortuitorum*. Seneca describes human life as a "confragosum . . . iter,"⁶⁸ and it is no great leap from a "rugged journey" to a pilgrimage full of woe. But an even closer parallel links Egeus' speech suggestively with the *De remediis*. Interestingly enough, the passage from the *De remediis* includes both the first and second themes of Egeus' oration:

"Morieris." Ista hominis natura est, non poena. "Morieris." Hac conditione intravi, ut exirem. "Morieris." Gentium lex est, quod acceperis reddere. "Morieris." Peregrinatio est vita: cum multum ambulaveris, domum redeundum est.⁶⁹

("You will die." This is the nature of man, not a punishment. "You will die." I have entered into this condition so that I may leave [it]. "You will die." The law of the human race is to give back what you have received. "You will die." Life is a pilgrimage. When you have wandered a great deal, you must return home.)

The same passage also appears in the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* almost verbatim, but in that treatise it is presented as part of an allegorical debate between "timor" and "securitas," dramatizing the virtue of confident assurance as a division of *fortitudo*:

"Morieris." *Securitas*: Ista est hominis natura, non pena. Hac conditione intraui, ut exirem. Gentium lex est quod acceperis reddere. Peregrinatio est uita; cum multum ambulaveris, redeundum est.⁷⁰

In this passage we hear *Securitas* responding to the declaration, "You will die" in just the worldly-wise terms Egeus chooses to shore Theseus up – to give him fortitude – against the sadness of Arcite's unexpected death.⁷¹

However banal Egeus' words may seem to modern readers, they constitute the core of a Senecan *consolatio* that serves a powerful function in the world of the *Knight's Tale*. By means of just this speech we witness Theseus' conversion from sadness to action. Immediately following Egeus' discourse, the narrator can introduce a new movement in the narrative, a movement necessitated by the *aventure* of Arcite's death, but given a characteristically ameliorative shape by Theseus' just and merciful action:

Duc Theseus, with al his bisy cure,
Caste now wher that the sepulture
Of goode Arcite may best ymaked be,
And eek moost honourable in his degree. (1.2853-56)

In the sequence I have been describing, Chaucer first distinguishes between unrestrained grief – a non-Stoic *pitee* among the members of the court – and Theseus' higher form of sorrow. Then, through Egeus' consolatory oration, he introduces lessons belonging to the virtue of Stoic *fortitudo* as a means of giving Theseus the strength to practice his wonted *iustitia*. The consequence is an elaborate, expensive funeral, "moost honourable" in relation to Arcite's "degree." Not only does Theseus in this episode *give* honor or *reverentia* once again; he does so by a form of beneficence exactly appropriate to Arcite's status.⁷²

I will return to Theseus' practice of beneficence later in this chapter. At this point, however, it is important to locate the duke's consistently noble conduct in the *Knight's Tale* in its relationship to the most basic premises of medieval Stoic treatises on the virtues. Chaucer does not tell us what training or study or experience has prompted Theseus' response to the several unexpected, surprising *aventures* in the *Tale*.⁷³ He simply dramatizes over and over, in the duke's behavior, a direct confrontation between a certain kind of human goodness, distinctly Stoic in character, and wily, treacherous Fortune.

To look once more at the *Tale's* first scene, Theseus might well have insisted on continuing his procession, regardless of the widows, clinging to the glory won in his defeat of the Amazons and his marriage to Ypolita. Or, moved to tears, he might have joined in the weeping of the women, succumbing to their plight with fear or horror. But in the event he chooses neither course. Detaching himself from his own prosperity by dismounting, he also separates himself in a certain way from the adversity of the widows. Though he embraces them with compassion, he does not break into tears. Instead, he promises noble action to give them relief. In his spontaneous act of goodness, he locates himself *between* adversity and

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prosperity. From a stable position of virtue he gives himself over to preserving the well-being of others, righting an injustice by an act of just and merciful vindication. Later on, instead of condemning Palamon and Arcite to death, he provides a civil, rational, merciful means to end their passionate strife. Sympathizing with their youthful, foolish desire without sharing it, he tames his own anger in order to enforce a harmonious social solution. And, in confronting the surprising adversity of Arcite's death, he does not participate in the uncontrolled weeping of his subjects, but, fortified by his father's speech, he finds a beneficent ceremonial means of easing the court's grief.

What gives each of these episodes in the *Knight's Tale* its extraordinary human delicacy, power, and credibility is the poet's tenuous balancing of Theseus' individual virtuous acts against the nearly overwhelming, unrelenting, unending pressure of chance and change in the mortal world. Yet the elegant poetry and the moving drama are supported by a basic Stoic moral paradigm concerning human virtue as a hedge against the world and Fortune's instability. As the author of the *Ysagoge* puts the formula:

iusticia duabus columpnis fulcitur, scilicet fortitudine contra timorem, et temperantia contra cupiditatem. Fortitudo enim est considerata periculorum susceptio et laborum perpressio. Temperantia est autem dominium rationis in illicitos animi motus. Est ergo fortitudo contra adversa, temperantia contra prospera. Hec ergo due virtutes iusticiam contra omnem casum illesam conservant.⁷⁴

(justice is supported by two columns, namely by fortitude against fear, and temperance against desire. For fortitude is the considered undertaking of dangers and perseverance in the work. Temperance is the rule of reason in the illicit motions of the soul. Fortitude, therefore is against adversities, temperance against prosperity. These two virtues, then, preserve justice against all chance events whatsoever.)

In shaping the moral character of his Theseus over the course of the *Knight's Tale*, Chaucer illustrates precisely how the Stoic virtues manifest themselves in the action of the just ruler as he counters the forces of *aventure*.

FINE AMOR AND LEGITIMATE MARRIAGE

Before turning to the subject of Theseus' and Chaucer's Stoic art, I want to glance for a moment at the character and principal functions of love and marriage in the *Knight's Tale*. As we saw in chapter 3, the collocation of Ovidian *fine amor*, legitimate marriage, and the processes of secular history had been a hallmark of the *romans antiques* from the twelfth century on. Chaucer too makes their interplay a central concern, but he does so to raise

questions that are not only social and moral but also metaphysical. Taking from Boccaccio his account of Palamon and Arcite's amorous rivalry for the beautiful Emelye, Chaucer also adapts the Italian poet's treatment of Teseo's marriage to Ipolita, and Palamone's to Emilia. But he greatly condenses both subjects, using the kind of shorthand available to a poet writing late in the literary tradition we have been tracing in this book. Both Ypolita's marriage to Theseus and the young knights' (foolish) passion for Emelye assume iconic significance in the *Tale*. Chaucer uses the traditional opposition between *stultus* and *legitimus amor* as a moral nucleus from which to develop his larger existential and philosophical concerns.

Though the subtitle of his *Teseida* is "le nozze di Emilia," Boccaccio had waited until the end of the second book to introduce the theme of marriage – in the nuptials of Teseo and Ipolita. Chaucer, by contrast, presents the Athenian duke's legitimate, politically appropriate wedding in the poem's very first verse-paragraph. He links it intimately with Theseus' military success, but he also sets it in very close proximity to the image of Fortune's wheel. When, in Chaucer's implied argument, Theseus weds Ypolita, he enacts a festive triumph over the processes of *aventure* and change. But, as the poem argues, both erotic love and marriage inevitably draw human beings into participation in the endless earthly alternation of birth and death. Emelye makes us keenly aware of this connection in a part of her prayer to Diana which is, in its emphasis, original with Chaucer:

. . . I
Desire to ben a mayden al my lyf,
Ne nevere wol I be no love ne wyf.
I am, thow woost, yet of thy compaignye,
A mayde, and love huntynge and venerye,
And for to walken in the wodes wilde,
And noght to ben a wyf and be with childe.

(1.2304–10; my emphasis)

Here the poet (through Emelye) links marriage with both bondage and childbearing in a way that Boccaccio had not. At the poem's end, after Emelye and Palamon have accepted Theseus' publicly announced plan for them, "the *bond*" is made "that highte matrimoigne or mariage,/ By al the conseil and the baronage" (1.3094–95). Chaucer omits the great, joyful ceremony with which Boccaccio had invested the same occasion, emphasizing by that omission the sobriety and human seriousness of the event.

In his treatment of *fine amor* Chaucer takes every opportunity to make his young lovers both sympathetic and typical. He greatly exaggerates the

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Ovidian symptoms developed by his French and Italian predecessors to characterize love's malady, and he intensifies the rivalry between the two knights. Moreover, though Palamon and Arcite view their plight after they have fallen in love as tragic, the Knight-teller and Theseus both invite the audience, in different but complementary ways, to find it representative and comic. While Arcite is "waillynge al the nyght, makynge his mone" (1.1366), for example, after his exile from Athens, the narrator, with his habitual preference for *brevitas*, deftly distances us from his suffering:

And shortly, turned was al up so down
Bothe habit and eek disposicioun
Of hym, this woful love daun Arcite. (1.1377-79)

When Chaucer's teller observes the changing moods of Arcite in the grove after his return to Athens, he remarks of the young knight that he acts "as doon thise loveres in hir queynte geres,/ Now in the crope, now down in the breres,/ Now up, now down, as boket in a welle" (1.1531-33). With his homely metaphors and his easy generalizations – "as doon thise loveres" – the Knight draws us stylistically and tonally away from Arcite's melancholy. In doing so, he offers us a mature, comic, and commonsensical view of Arcite's experience which the young lover cannot possibly share.

On an exactly parallel note – though in a higher social register – Theseus gives a comedic, Stoic turn to the entire subject of *fine amor* as he forgives Palamon and Arcite for their treachery. In Boccaccio's *Teseida*, Teseo had admitted in a single verb ("follegiai") to having committed follies in love (v.92.2), and then he had mentioned one of them. Chaucer's Theseus, by contrast, both elaborates and generalizes the traditional theme of folly in Ovidian love. In a tone of comic wonderment, he comments on the behavior of the two warring young knights:

Now looketh, is nat that an heigh *folye*?
Who may been a *fool* but if he love?
...
A man moot ben a *fool*, or yong or oold –
I woot it by myself ful yore agon,
For in my tyme a servant was I oon.
And therfore, syn I knowe of loves payne
And woot hou soore it kan a man distreyne,
As he that hath ben caught ofte in his laas,
I yow foryeve al hoolly this trespaas,
At requeste of the queene, that kneleth heere,
And eek of Emelye, my suster deere.
(1.1798-99; 1812-20; my emphasis)

Not only does Chaucer have his Theseus underscore the *folye* of love; he also adds to the scene as a whole the intervention of Ypolita, whom Theseus names at the end of his speech of forgiveness as "queene." As queen, she is also, we know, Theseus' wife. Through her presence and social generosity in the episode, the poet brings *legitimus amor* and *stultus amor* into iconic conjunction. With astonishing economy, he allows the civilizing power of legitimate marriage to frame and comment gently on the destructive foolishness of erotic passion unsanctioned by society.

Unlike Boccaccio, Chaucer does not use *fine amor* – or loving *paramours* – to develop an abstract moral theory about the irascible and concupiscible appetites in human beings. To be sure, he moves in the direction of personification allegory in Part III of his *Tale* as the Knight describes the temple of Venus. But in presenting the subject of Ovidian love depicted in the temple's wall-paintings, he turns not so much to Boccaccio as to Guillaume de Lorris's *Roman de la rose*. The anatomy of the virtues and vices connected with *fine amor* is full, vivid, and extraordinarily compact. While Boccaccio had used 128 lines, Chaucer completes his ekphrasis in forty-nine (1.1918–66). In his description, he emphasizes, moreover, the largely painful, negative phenomenology of erotic passion rather than any specific ethical significance. He also indicates the proper or dominant response to the figures painted on the temple walls: they are "pitous to biholde" (1.1919). As V.A. Kolve has observed, "the psychopathology of erotic love claims at least equal place with 'Pleasaunce and Hope,' 'Beautee and Youthe,' and all that is most attractive within the planet's [i.e., Venus'] influence."⁷⁵ We are meant, so the Knight-narrator suggests, to respond to this psychopathology not with moral opprobrium but with sympathy. By linking Ovidian love more to painful *aventure* than to narrowly moral or social concerns, Chaucer alters the terms of the French and Italian tradition of the *roman antique*. In his argument, *fole amor* – like political tyranny, war, chance, and death – cannot be avoided in human life. Legitimate marriage, on the other hand, belongs to the civilizing realm of moral virtue and responsible art, exemplified in the *Knight's Tale* by Theseus in his Stoic conduct. Like virtue and art, publicly sanctioned marriage allows a certain, though limited power over Fortune and time.

THESEUS' AMPHITHEATER AND CHAUCER'S *KNIGHT'S TALE* AS STOIC ART

Let us examine now one of the longest sequences in the *Knight's Tale* – a sequence initiated by Theseus' rational, generous forgiveness of the two young knights. Not only does he plan a joust as a means of settling the

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love-quarrel between Arcite and Palamon; he also commissions the building of a great amphitheater as the appropriately harmonious, social setting for the tournament. The long description of the amphitheater and its temples, together with the account of the preparations for the "greete . . . feeste," interrupts the pattern of *aventure* in the poem for seven hundred lines. The duke's orders for his amphitheater as well as his orchestration of the grand tourney fall explicitly under the *aegis* of just beneficence as that virtue is described in medieval treatises influenced by Stoic theory. *Beneficentia*, according to the treatises, is that part of *iustitia* "by which we are ready to put forward the required amounts of money for the sake of the needs of human beings."⁷⁶

Part III of the *Tale* begins with the narrator's solicitous concern for the audience (itself a form of *reverentia*, combined with a sense of proportion and decorum). His listeners, he suggests, would *want* to know just how Theseus designed the setting for the royal lists, and especially his financial generosity:

I trowe men wolde deme it necligence
If I foryete to tellen the *dispence*
Of Theseus, that gooth so bisily
To maken up the lystes roially,
That swich a noble theatre as it was
I dar wel seyen in this world ther nas.
The circuit a myle was aboute,
Walled of stoon, and dyched al withoute.

(I.1881-88; my emphasis)

On a similar note, two hundred lines later, the Knight-teller concludes his detailed description of the royal lists, emphasizing the great expense of the art work the duke has commissioned and the pleasure he takes in the completed form:

Now been thise lystes maad, and Theseus,
That *at his grete cost* arrayed thus
The temples and the theatre every deel,
Whan it was doon, hym lyked wonder weel.

(I.2089-92; my emphasis)

In the detailed descriptions of the theater and the temple-paintings that fall between these parentheses, the narrator observes for us at several points the fineness of the craftsmanship and the great cost of the enterprise. Theseus provides "mete and wages" to every skilled craftsman, painter, and sculptor in his land (I.1897-1901); the temple of Mars "coste largely of gold a fother" (I.1908); the paintings in the temple of Venus are organized "by

ordre," despite the unruliness of the subjects depicted (1.1931-34); the portraiture in the temple of Mars, for all its surprising, destructive horror, is achieved "with soutil pencil . . . / In redoutynge of Mars and of his glorie" (1.2049-50); and in Diana's temple, the artist who knows how to "peynten lifly" has bought his "hewes" "with many a floryn" (1.2087-88).

If the wall-paintings, which are the chief subject of the narrator's interest in the amphitheater, are subtly drawn and colored with expensive "hewes," they are, because of their subjects, also "pitous to biholde." The Knight-narrator as a connoisseur of art directs our "compassionate" responses as we witness through him the *matere* of the murals: the "sikes,/ . . . teeris . . . waymentynge,/ The firy strokes of the desiryng" that lovers endure (1.1920-23); "cruel Ire"; "pale Drede"; "the tresoun of the mordryng in the bedde"; "open werre"; suicides, their hair bathed in blood; "colde deeth, with mouth gapyng upright"; "Meschaunce"; "the tiraunt, with the pray by force yraft"; the baby in its cradle eaten by a sow (1.1997-2019); Acteon, turned into a deer and devoured by his hounds for having looked on vengeful, chaste Diana naked (1.2065-68); a woman laboring in the pangs of childbirth (1.2083-84). For all the display of wealth and craft in the paintings, it would be difficult to imagine grimmer galleries of art than those invented by Chaucer for Theseus' temples.

We know that Chaucer drew his inspiration for the wall-paintings in Part III of the *Knight's Tale* from Boccaccio, who gives comparable descriptions of the temples devoted to Mars and Venus in his *Teseida*. Yet there are important differences between the Italian poet's "pagan" art and Chaucer's. Boccaccio, in his glosses for Book VII of the *Teseida*, uses Aristotelian terms to allegorize, and thereby rationalize, the terrible images of hate, wrath, and destruction in Mars's temple. They represent, he says, the "irascible appetite" by which "men of much blood become angry easily." Those who succumb to the force of this appetite in an irrational way become "cruel and intransigent and without any charity." By the same token, the tears, the sighs, the desires of love in Venus' temple result from the "false judgment of the voluptuous," who give themselves over to the concupiscible appetite. Boccaccio's allegorizations, which are explicitly available in the margins of the text as he designed it, and implicit in the argument of the whole poem, attribute to humans the power to control the destructive motions of passionate love, violent anger, and war.

Chaucer, by contrast, widens the scope of the destruction, misfortune, and pain he aligns with Mars, Venus, and Diana, and he discourages allegorization. As A.C. Spearing has put it, "In the case of Mars, especially, Chaucer evokes a propensity to destructive violence that pervades every aspect of life, in suicide, assassination, tyrannical rule, revolution, and all

the horrifying 'accidents' . . . of everyday life."⁷⁷ Moreover, the strictly human, pagan boundaries of the *Knight's Tale* offer no scope for rationalizing the phenomenological horrors visited on the unsuspecting by erotic passion, murder, theft, suicide, death, war, tyranny, and simple accident. Chaucer's emphasis, unlike Boccaccio's, is on victims rather than agents in the matter of suffering and disaster. In describing the sphere of Mars, particularly, the English poet emphasizes "misfortune" rather than causality, especially in his account of the baby eaten in its cradle, the carter run over by the wheels of his own wagon. He also includes the unavoidable suffering of women in the "travail" of childbirth in his long catalogue of human pain and devastation. In sum, what we confront metonymically in the *matere* of Theseus' wall-paintings is the same pattern of destructive *aventure*, mischance, and passion that governs the *Tale* and the Stoically defined world of pagan Thebes and Athens. Whatever explanatory *sen* the paintings have lies in an appreciation of Theseus' virtuous beneficence and the craft of the artists who have made them. But neither the duke's virtue nor the skill of the painters can transform the matter or fully control it by rational exegesis of the kind Boccaccio neatly provides in his *Teseida*.

Several scholars have suggested a consonance between the art Theseus orders, finances, and oversees for his lists and the highly structured, pleasing design of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. In the poem, as Robert Jordan argues, Chaucer celebrates "*homo faber*" and "man's capacity to build . . . a social order, ethical conventions, splendid buildings, noble poems – and to endow these works with dignity and grandeur." More recently, V.A. Kolve has suggested that Theseus' "building of the amphitheatre from within the fiction [of the *Knight's Tale*] . . . may be said to parallel Chaucer's own enterprise in the creation of the poem." He points particularly to its "detailed invention and rhetorical decoration as well as . . . the major alterations he makes to his source . . . the distribution of its material within . . . new structural units."⁷⁸ In this regard, Kolve concludes, Chaucer views himself both as a creator like Jupiter and a "maker" of a "more modest kind" like the painters and sculptors who decorate the temples at the duke's order. These observations, it seems to me, are important and correct; yet they require significant modification. There is a deep sense in which Theseus' amphitheater and its art mirror the "antique" (as opposed to "Christian") art of the *Knight's Tale* – a kind of mirroring that helps to explain certain problems the *Tale* has raised for many readers.

In Canto x of his *Purgatorio*, Dante had imagined for his readers the nature of God's redemptive, platonically inspired sculptural art, an art that would, as the Italian poet says, "put both the ancient sculptor, Polycletus, and nature to shame" (28–33). Among the images of great humility carved

by divine power in the marble bank of Purgatory's first terrace, the pilgrim-narrator records the figure of the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation – a figure so life-like that she seems in her bearing to be saying “Ecce ancilla Dei.” Virtue infused by God's grace emanates from the sculpted image, not only giving the human creature a divinely graceful form but also expressing the eternal life of her spirit.

In pointed contrast, both Theseus' amphitheater and Chaucer's design for the *Knight's Tale* as a *roman antique* dramatize for us, in a challenging, original way, the powers and limits of a strictly human, pagan, mimetic art. This art, though it is commissioned and overseen by the most virtuous of men, does not celebrate either the beauty of the good soul or the beauty of human life, though both of these subjects figure in the presentation. Yet, the art is, in its very essence, “lifty.” Unlike God's art in the *Purgatorio*, which imitates exemplary Christian virtue *in actu* (a manifestly selective, platonic kind of “lifynesse”), the art of the *Knight's Tale*, like Theseus' amphitheater, mirrors the whole, devastating content of mortal human life in all its phenomenological disorderliness. To be sure, the mirroring is softened and distanced by the interventions of noble virtue, aesthetic form, and costly materials. Virtue and form control, as far as they can, the most potentially painful of subjects for human beings, the suffering caused by *aventure*, debilitating passion, and death. But the control is, at best, only partial and tenuous.

The finely wrought art in Theseus' temple-paintings resembles, at least in large measure, the carving Daedalus had provided for the doors of Apollo's temple in Book VI of the *Aeneid*.⁷⁹ There, on the temple portals, as Virgil recounts it, the ingenious craftsman had worked in gold what Bernard Silvestris summarizes as the “fabule poetarum”: the murder of Minos' son; Minos' cruel revenge against the Athenians and their punishment in a yearly tribute of “seven corpses of their sons”; the story of Pasiphae and her “crudelis amor”; for the bull; the “bi-formis proles” of her passionate union – the Minotaur, who is a memorial of “despicable Venus”; the maze built by Minos to imprison the Minotaur together with Daedalus and his son, Icarus; Daedalus' clever escape. One subject, however, Daedalus cannot record on the temple doors, despite his attempts to do so. “Twice,” we are told, “he tried to represent the death of his son, Icarus,” and twice he failed. He could not “casus in auro effingere” (depict the misadventure in gold) (VI.32).⁸⁰ Virgil does not explain why Daedalus failed in this last effort, nor does he need to do so. We know that it is the father's pain as he recalls Icarus' unfortunate death (his *casus*) that keeps him from transforming the event into costly art.

When, in Book XI of Boccaccio's *Teseida*, Palemone supervises the

building and artistic decoration of a temple in honor of the dead Arcita, the artist he hires, like Daedalus, omits the image of the young man's actual death. The temple, we are told, was "grande" and, to please himself, Palemone had "tutti i casi d'Arcita istoriare/ e adornar di lavorio perfetto/ da tal che ottimamente il seppe fare" (all the adventures of Arcita recounted and decorated with perfect craftsmanship by one who knew how to do it extremely well (XI.70.1, 4-6). Boccaccio devotes nineteen full stanzas to the memorial matter of Arcita's *historia*, which also affords him the opportunity to summarize his own poem. And he, like Chaucer, records the appropriate response to the art. The Athenians, the narrator says, "rimirando spesso,/ con giusto cuor pietà avevan d'esso" (gazing intently on it often, justly had compassion for [Arcita] in their hearts) (XI.70.7-8). But Arcita's fall from his horse is not retold in the artful series: "Sola la sua caduta da cavallo/ gli uscì di mente né vi fu segnata" (Only his fall from the horse was omitted, and was not represented there) (XI.88.1-2). This omission does not put Arcita's death out of mind, as the narrator hastens to insist, for love has imbedded the event "with heavy sorrow" in their hearts (88.7). But even the finest human art, the omission implies, cannot adequately represent or transform the harsh, unadorned event of the beloved young man's unfortunate, accidental death.

When we examine Theseus' wall-paintings and the art Chaucer gives his Knight in telling his *Tale*, we discover that they are both similar to, and significantly different from, the doors sculpted by Daedalus in the *Aeneid* and the memorial art orchestrated by Palemone in the *Teseida*. In all four cases – in the Knight's *roman antique*, in Theseus' paintings, in Daedalus' carvings, in Palemone's temple decorations – the most fundamental subject or *matere* is human passion, *aventure*, and death. But in Daedalus' sculpture and the images commissioned by Palemone, the artists have *not* depicted those deaths which have occasioned the deepest grief – the deaths of Icarus and Arcita. By contrast, the Knight-teller of Chaucer's tale soberly records every detail of Arcite's dying – the gradual failure of his bodily functions, the cold of death creeping through his body until no life is left in it.

Here we have an art that does not shrink as Daedalus' and the Italian Palemone's does, from the harshest moment of all – the actual death of a handsome, honorable young knight. In a comparable way, Theseus' wall-paintings concentrate on images of violent death, and the noble duke, faced with Arcite's corpse, personally clothes it in royal splendor for the grand funeral he has arranged. To be sure, the Knight has the advantage of telling an "olde storie." For him, Arcite is an ancient character, while for Theseus he is a young protégé in his court. Yet the philosophical stance Chaucer gives his Knight-teller throughout the poem – not only in relation

to his pagan matter but also in relation to human life in general – consistently mirrors Theseus' Stoic awareness of, and detachment from, the inevitably destructive processes of mortal *aventure*. If, as Kolve has argued, "Chaucer's narrative voice in *The Knight's Tale* is . . . not highly inflected or individual," telling us "little about a specific knight-narrator," it is also a voice that pervasively speaks a homely version of Theseus' pagan Stoic doctrine.⁸¹ The teller uses a wide range of devices and topoi to distance himself and his audience from the *Tale's* painful matter and give it formal shape: *occupatio*, *humilitas*; *brevitas*; familiar proverbs on the subject of Fortune and the need for equanimity; humor; calm acceptance of Nature's workings; genial rhetorical questioning. He also participates, as we have seen, in Theseus' virtue, appreciating with him the art of his amphitheater; recording (with poetic amplitude) the details of Arcite's funeral pyre, though he says he will not; attending with *reverentia* and *liberalitas* to the desires of his immediate audience and the demands of the Canterbury game.

How, then, does Chaucer define Theseus' art in the temples of his amphitheater? And, *a fortiori*, what is the particular character of his *Knight's Tale* as a *roman antique* insofar as it may be said to mirror the pagan art of the theater and temple-paintings commissioned by the duke? Redesigning Boccaccio's Teseo, and re-forming the Italian poet's narrator at the same time, Chaucer insists on the *antique* character of the *Knight's* poem and Theseus' virtue as well as his art – their affinities with an authentically ancient vision of the world. In particular, through his structuring of the *Tale*, the English poet studies the capacities of human virtue, strictly defined in medievalized Senecan and Ciceronian terms, to respond to the ravages of Fortune. The triumphs of virtue possible within this conception of things are modest and partial. Theseus overcomes Creon, but, in the process, he also lays waste to Thebes. He finds a virtuous, social means to resolve Palamon and Arcite's passionate feud in his great tournament and forbids the contestants to kill each other; but by accident Arcite dies. The paintings his artists produce for the temples are costly and elegantly arranged; but they depict the sufferings characteristic of life in the mortal world. Antique fiction, in Chaucer's design, must record the "lyfly" untidiness of mortal life as we all inevitably experience it, without offering transcendent Christian solutions. Nonetheless, the solutions it can provide have a special kind of beauty – what Elizabeth Salter has called a "sad lucidity." Moreover, they are solutions which provide a noble, usable example for Christians.

In attempting to understand the *Knight's Tale*, scholars have devoted considerable attention to Theseus' "Prime Mover" speech, delivered to his

court very near the poem's end.⁸² This attention is well justified. Omitting Boccaccio's detailed, celebratory description of Palemone's marriage to Emilia in the *Teseida*, Chaucer uses Theseus' speech to initiate the conclusion of his *Tale*, and, in doing so, he deliberately recasts Teseo's parallel discourse in the *Teseida*. He clearly recognizes the Senecan character of Teseo's consolatory oration, not only translating the Italian text but embellishing it with arguments and language drawn either directly from Seneca or from the *De remediis fortuitorum*. He also redistributes the matter of the speech, as we have already seen. By giving part of it to Theseus' father, Egeus, and part to Theseus himself, he creates not one but two formal Stoic consolations. We have already considered the matter and function of Egeus' discourse on the inevitability of death and the woe of life, delivered to comfort Theseus and his subjects. We must now turn to the noble Athenian duke's concluding oration on change, succession, death, and honor in the mortal world.

Had Chaucer's Theseus argued simply, as Boccaccio's Teseo does, that human beings, like everything else within the limits of the world, must die, his speech would have been unexceptional. It would have corresponded straightforwardly, moreover, to the generally Stoic cast Chaucer gives to Theseus' conduct throughout his *Knight's Tale*. Instead, however, even as the English poet elaborates Teseo's Senecan theme,⁸³ he also subordinates it to a metaphysical trajectory borrowed from Boethius. Since the vision projected through most of the *Tale* corroborates old Egeus' Stoic view of the world as a "thurghfare ful of wo" (1.2847), his son's leap from this "wrecched world adoun" to Jupiter's "faire chayne of love" comes as something of a surprise. Yet, in Chaucer's argument, this philosophical leap from the imperfect, "corruptable" world to the Prime Mover provides a proto-Boethian philosophical foundation for the pagan duke's noble practice of virtue and also for the aesthetic contours of his art.⁸⁴ From empirical observation of imperfection, partiality, and wretchedness in the mortal world – what one may "understonde and seen at ye" (3016) – his mind and the processes of logic, so Theseus suggests, cannot help but move towards what is "hool," "stable and eterne," and "parfit" (3006; 3004; 3009).

As several scholars have noticed, however, Theseus borrows only part of Boethius' argument concerning perfection and the *summum bonum*, and not the whole. His experience and his pagan theodicy leave him grounded in the world's wretchedness and his observations of imperfection. He does not ascend, as Boethius does through Lady Philosophy, to understand the *summum bonum in se*. Yet his rational intimations of divine order, Chaucer's argument implies, enable his acts of amelioration in the *Tale* – whether these are acts of justice or fortitude or temperance in the face of devastating

Chaucer and the *roman antique*

aventure or of noble beneficence in the commissioning of temple-paintings or elegant consolatory rhetoric. There is poetry as well as virtue in the way Theseus responds to the limited, mortal world of the *Knight's Tale*, though he cannot achieve actual spiritual transcendence of the kind proposed by Christian revelation. Yet he does have the power – as poets also do – to orchestrate *moments* of “parfit joye,” to give us hints of everlasting bliss, by way of metaphor, analogy, and rhetorical assertion. The “Prime Mover” speech concludes not in an experience of immortality or Boethian participation in the *summum bonum* but in the prospect of Palamon and Emelye’s earthly marriage:

And er that we departen from this place
I rede that we make of sorwes two
O parfit joye, lastynge everemo. (1.3070–72)

The alchemy Theseus proposes with his ceremonial rhetoric – the transformation of two sorrows into one perfect, *everlasting* joy – is, in fact, not possible within the mortal world. Much of Theseus’ speech argues against such permanent joy and so does the whole of the *Knight's Tale*. The secular dream of a perfect (and politically perfect) marriage projected in the duke’s rhetoric and echoed by the Knight–teller is no more final than the form of Chaucer’s *roman antique*. Both are beautiful fictions. Yet, for those who share a faith in the order they imply, both of them serve to mediate the distance between the inevitable sorrows and *aventures* of life in the mortal world and the wholeness, “stable and eterne,” of Theseus’ Prime Mover. They serve, in Boethian terms, as examples of that “freel and veyn and inparfyt” bliss which cannot fail to point towards another, transcendent “blisfulnesse that is sad, stedefast, and parfyt.”⁸⁵

The questions raised by the most important pagan characters in the *Knight's Tale* are not fully answered by Chaucer’s fiction, as they *are* answered by the Christianizing Boccaccio in the marginal *chiose* for his *Teseida* and also by the epilogue to *Troilus and Criseyde*. The expected neat fit between *sen* and *matière* characteristic of Chaucer’s sources and exemplars – the medieval French and Italian *romans antiques* – is to be found neither in Theseus’ temple art nor in the Knight’s narrative. In this regard, Chaucer absorbs a central feature of the earlier *romans antiques* – their problematic, questioning structure – and turns it to rigorous philosophical use within the context of his classicizing art. Neither Egeus’ description of life and death nor Theseus’ “Prime Mover” speech fully resolves the dilemmas of causality and injustice posed by the *Tale*.

What is possible, however, in Chaucer’s conceptions of pagan art, pagan

philosophy, and pagan life as these operate in and help to shape the *Knight's Tale* as a *roman antique*, is a noble, steadying vision of the passing scene, and a sober, cheerful acceptance of the "necessitee" of change, chance, *aventure*, and death, as these can be countered by the practice of Stoic virtue. In Boethius' *Consolatio*, Philosophy had explained the epistemological error of the Stoics, who, as Chaucer's gloss explains, believed that "the sowle had ben nakid of itself, as a mirour or a clene parchemyn, so that alle figures most first comen fro thinges fro withoute into soules, and ben emprientid into soules" (V, m.4).⁸⁶ In composing his *Knight's Tale*, Chaucer limits his characters to just such a commitment to the world of appearances, accompanied by a deterministic philosophy and an ineffectual pantheon. They lack precisely the Boethian power to transcend or transform sense impressions by raising their heads "to ryght heye thinges". Without the possibility of consulting the "foormes ihidd withynne" themselves – as Platonists or Boethians would – they (and their art at its best) can only make a virtue of necessity in their "corrumpable" world. The *Knight's Tale* models for us a first stage not only in the history of human civilization and moral *societas*, but also in the history of secular art. Its Stoic study of *aventure* and noble virtue provides the necessary ground, in Chaucer's argument, for all accounts of the human, mortal condition, whether classical or Christian. At the same time, Theseus' concluding glance at a providential order in the universe and everlasting bliss does hint, however wistfully and briefly, at the possibility of perfection beyond the horizon of the mortal world and beyond the limits of pagan art and its medieval translations.

Epilogue

The tradition of the *roman antique* does not end with Chaucer. Its history continues into the fifteenth century both in Britain and on the Continent, though the political, social, and moral imperatives of a new century modify the poetics of its constituents. In 1412, a year before he succeeded to the throne as Henry V, the Prince of Wales commissioned John Lydgate to translate Guido delle Colonne's Latin *Historia destructionis Troiae* into English verse. Lydgate offers his *Troy Book* so that his king and other readers may "remembre ageyn" the "worthynes" "of verray kny3thod" . . . /And the prowesse of olde chivalrie" (76–78).¹ Lydgate completed his long poem in 1420, and by the end of that same year he had begun a second classicizing verse romance, his *Siege of Thebes*, as a companion to Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*.² Later in the century, the Scots poet, Robert Henryson, perhaps the most original of the fifteenth-century poets responding to the tradition of the *roman antique*, wrote his *Testament of Cresseid* as a conclusion to and commentary on Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*.³ On the Continent, Beauvau the Seneschal translated Boccaccio's *Filostrato* into French prose in the late fourteenth or fifteenth century,⁴ and an anonymous French translation of the *Teseida* appeared in 1470.⁵ But no one of these later works is equal in imaginative invention of form or complexity of ethical questioning to the poems we have been examining.

To be sure, the fifteenth-century translations, imitations, and continuations of the earlier *romans antiques*, like their forebears, belong to a courtly literature of moral instruction for high-born audiences of "worthie" persons. They conform to the general expectation held out for all "histories" in the later Middle Ages. As Philippe of Commines puts it in his *Mémoires*: "It is very advantageous to princes to have read history in their youth in which they learn . . . the great frauds, deceptions and perjuries which some of the ancients have committed against each other."⁶ Both Lydgate and Henryson insist on the function of their poems as *specula*. Their ancient characters explicitly mirror the consequences of sin while their narrators (lacking the fictive complexity of their forebears in the tradition of the *roman antique*) preach "gude moralite."⁷

Epilogue

It would be a mistake to consider all fifteenth-century writers in the tradition of the *roman antique* mere epigones, shadowing their greater forebears. Yet their responses to their models tend to lack precisely those qualities which, in the earlier texts, had given an ethically problematic, circumstantial density to the classical matter of Thebes and Troy. Gone is the rich, dramatic tension between the public and private spheres, realized largely through the theatricality of direct speech and interior debate. Gone too is the narratorial multivocality that had allowed several different positions on the same matter to jostle for attention within the text. Nor do the fifteenth-century writers turn, as the *Eneas*-poet, Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Boccaccio, and Chaucer had, to the classical *auctores* – and particularly Ovid – for new materials to enliven their narratives. The French translators simply follow Boccaccio, while the English writers seem scarcely interested in the lyrical drama of *fine amor* that had so fully colored and unsettled the earlier poets' treatment of public history. Henryson entirely supplants the love interest with his concern for Cresseid's punishment and death, while Lydgate, following Guido delle Colonne, uses the love affairs in his *Troy Book* simply to condemn women.

What gives the *romans antiques* I have discussed in this book their special poetic character, distinguishing them from their fifteenth-century progeny, also renders them problematic for their public. No doubt they challenged their first audiences as they do us, though in somewhat different ways. Let us return for a moment to the scene with which I began – Criseyde in her parlor, listening to a maiden reading from a *romaunce* of Thebes. What she would have heard, Chaucer implies, is something like what we hear or read in attending to his own *Troilus and Criseyde*. Her romance would have offered her not an abstract ethical prescription for responding to secular aristocratic life but a densely circumstantial story within which characters must interpret their own morally ambiguous situations. Criseyde does not tell us what she has learned from the *romaunce*, except to mention details of the plot. But, without having gotten very far into the tragedy of Thebes, she willingly gives up her book in favor of play.

In his heroine's rejection of her romance, Chaucer gives us one reader's response to just the kind of book he is offering his own audience. My readings of his *Troilus* and of several other *romans antiques* have been of an altogether different cast. The close retrospective analyses of *written* texts that make up the bulk of each chapter are of a kind that would have been impossible for a medieval listening audience, even one willing to listen to the end.⁸ In this respect, I have been concerned less with possible audience response than with retracing the writers' processes of composition and the formal and ethical designs underlying their narratives. In doing this, I have

also tried to discover, as far as I could, the *auctores* to whom they turned for ideas, formal models, imagery, and *moralitates*.

At no point, however, have I meant to suggest that the readings I offer are the only ones possible. The very modes of poetic investigation employed by the twelfth-century *romanciers*, Boccaccio, and Chaucer defy single or simple interpretation. Each of their poems, as we have seen, invites from its public an unusually rigorous intellectual, imaginative, and moral agility in judging the behavior of characters *within* and *through* the narrative process. Even when we know – or think we know – what moral paradigms and what formal principles underlie the plot, the interplay between ideas and narrative action will be perceived differently by different readers. Yet it has been my argument that both our readerly perception and our judgment are substantially enriched by reading all of the poems together within the context of the medieval Latin arts curriculum from which they spring. As an interdependent cohort, the seven *romans antiques* explored in this book constitute one of the most fascinating formal traditions of the later Middle Ages.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

- 1 All references to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* are to the edition by Stephen A. Barney in the *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987). See chapter 6, note 1.
- 2 On Chaucer's audience, see Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 47–83. See also Ruth Crosby, "Chaucer and the Custom of Oral Delivery," *Speculum* 13 (1938), 413–32; Bertrand H. Bronson, "Chaucer's Art in Relation to His Audience," *Five Studies in Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1940), 1–53; Leonard Koff, *Chaucer and the Art of Storytelling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
- 3 *The Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982).
- 4 *The Sociology of Literature*, trans. E. Pick (Painesville, Ohio: Lake Erie College Studies, 1965), 26.
- 5 On this subject, see Gustavo Firmat, "The Novel as Genre," *Genre* 12 (1979), 289.
- 6 "Historical Criticism and the Claims of Humanism," in *Negotiating the Past* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 72–73.
- 7 Hans Robert Jauss, in his seminal comments on the "alterity" of medieval literature has established "Alterität" as one legitimate goal for interpreters of medieval texts (*Alterität und Modernität der mittelalterlichen Literatur* [Munich: Fink 1977], and "The Alterity and Modernity of Medieval Literature," *NLH* 10 [1979], 385–90). See also Paul Zumthor, "Comments on H.R. Jauss's Article," *NLH* 10 (1979), 367–76. For a critique of Jauss's position, see Patterson, "Historical Criticism," 7–8.
- 8 On the question of authorial intention, see also Patterson's recent essay on the limits of literary historicism. He usefully supports the notion that authorial intention is worth studying against those who regard intention as "an interpretive category" to be "written off as a vestige of positivism" ("Historical Criticism," 73).
- 9 Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS C.198.Inf. = S.P. 5, f. 1r.
- 10 *Roman de Troie*, ed. Léopold Constans (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1904), 1, 1, 8.
- 11 In a useful article, Marie-Louise Ollier has emphasized the connection Chrétien de Troyes insists upon between his vernacular writing and the model of the Latin book. "It is," she argues, "as if Latin culture, founded on writing,

in some way imposed the model of the book on this nascent literature” (my emphasis). The connection as Chrétien develops it is, Ollier implies, a general one. “[T]hrough the *auctoritas* that [Latin] writing confers,” Ollier concludes, “the *roman* is invested with the prestige of the *livre*, the depository of all *doctrina*” (“The Author in the Text: The Prologues of Chrétien de Troyes,” *YFS* 51 [1974], 29). In fact, the authors of the French *romans antiques*, probably writing a generation before Chrétien, had established this principle as a basis for their poems far more fully and precisely than Chrétien. They insist often and explicitly on an intimate relationship between specific, authoritative Latin books and their vernacular “translations.”

- 12 To ignore the visual connections poets in the tradition of the *roman antique* made with Latin manuscript books as they designed their compositions and to rely only on modern editions can lead to serious misreadings. In his famous article on Chaucer’s use of Boccaccio’s *Filostrato*, for example, C.S. Lewis based his interpretation of the Italian poem entirely on the nineteenth- and twentieth-century editions and translations of the *Filostrato* then available. Near the beginning of his essay, Lewis pays tribute to William Michael Rossetti, who had produced a parallel text (in Modern English and Middle English) of the *Filostrato* and *Troilus* for the Chaucer Society. Rossetti had translated and printed only those lines of the *Filostrato* which Chaucer had actually borrowed. Though he gave brief summaries of the parts of the Italian poem omitted by Chaucer, no scholar, depending on Rossetti, could have gleaned the least notion of Boccaccio’s text either as a poem in *ottava rima* or as a composition. In 1932, Lewis would also have had access to three editions of the *Filostrato*, one published in 1831, a second in 1911, virtually reproducing the first, and a third, in 1929. The last of these – a reprint of the nineteenth-century edition, together with a parallel English prose translation by N.E. Griffin and A.B. Myrick – would have given Lewis precisely the impression of the *Filostrato* that dominates his comparative reading of the English and Italian poems. The Griffin/Myrick text and translation, like the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century editions of the *Filostrato*, omits the prose rubrics which, in the manuscript tradition, carefully divide the poem’s nine *parti* into myriad subdivisions and explain their contents. Moreover, the English translation of the *Filostrato* Lewis would have used is in prose, a medium that focuses on the unfolding of the story rather than on the working of the poetry. It is not surprising, then, that Lewis imagines Chaucer (like himself) finding the *Filostrato* a “good story” and “feeling the charm of its narrative power.” In addition, Lewis, eager to emphasize Boccaccio’s concern with story as opposed to Chaucer’s interest in *doctryne*, ignores the Italian poem’s prologal prose epistle entirely. He supposes explicitly in his essay that Chaucer had before him a “manuscript beginning with the words *Alcun di giove sogliono il favore*” (57). “What Chaucer Really Did to ‘Il Filostrato,’” *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association* 17 (1932), 56–75; reprinted in Stephen Barney, ed., *Chaucer’s Troilus* (Hamden, Conn.: Shoe-string Press, 1980), 37–54.

- 13 For problems in using this appellation, however, see Aimé Petit, *Naissances du*

- roman: les techniques littéraires dans les romans antiques du XII siècle* (Paris and Geneva: Champion-Slatkine, 1985), vol. 1, 14-15.
- 14 See, for example, the debate between Robert Marichal and Pierre Gallais. Marichal argues his position in "La Naissance du roman" (*Entretiens sur la Renaissance du XIIe siècle* [Paris and The Hague: Mouton, 1968], 449-76). Gallais responds in his review of Marichal's book, "De la Naissance du roman," *CCM* 14 (1971), 71-72. The argument (favoring Marichal) is continued in a recent study by Jean-Charles Huchet called simply *Le Roman médiéval* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984): "Le roman . . . n'est pas né avec le *Tristan* ou les œuvres de Chrétien de Troyes, mais avec les romans antiques (*Thèbes*, *l'Eneas* et *Troie*) qui conquièrent à la langue romane, vers le milieu du XIIe siècle, quelques grands textes de l'Antiquité" (9).
 - 15 Marichal, "Naissance," 451. See also Gallais, "De la Naissance," 69.
 - 16 Hans Robert Jauss provides one useful rationale for this view in "Theory of Genres and Medieval Literature" (*Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. T. Bahti [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982], 109).
 - 17 Robert Marichal, for example, argues for a list of five works: Wace's *Brut*, the two earliest versions of the *Roman d'Alexandre*, the *Roman de Thèbes*, the *Roman d'Eneas*, and the *Roman de Troie* ("Naissances," 451). More recently, Aimé Petit has included *Thèbes*, *Eneas*, *Troie*, and Alexander of Bernai's *Roman d'Alexandre* in his "corpus." For the debate on this subject, see Petit, *Naissances*, vol. 1, 10-14.
 - 18 Among the most obvious English candidates for inclusion in the medieval tradition of the *roman antique* are John Lydgate's *Troy Book* (1412) and *Siege of Thebes* (1420-22) and Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*. See Derek Pearsall, "The English Chaucerians," in Derek S. Brewer (ed.), *Chaucer and Chaucerians* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1966), 212-18; Robert W. Ayers, "Medieval History, Moral Purpose, and the Structure of Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*," *PMLA* 73 (1958), 463-74; and A.C. Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 66-88.
 - 19 Wace, *Brut*, line 2. Wace's *Brut* (1155), written for Henry II Plantagenet, epitomizes the kind of historiography encouraged at Henry's court. Though Wace's *Brut* is sometimes described by scholars as a *roman antique*, it, like Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Chronique des ducs de Normandie* and Wace's *Roman de Rou*, emphasizes the linear progression of history over the moral *sen* and operates far more by third-person narration than by juxtaposed dramatic voices.
 - 20 The author of the *Roman de Thèbes* gives an explicit description of the courtly audience for whom he intends his poem:

Or s'en tesent de cest mestier,
se ne sont clerc ou chevalier,
car ausi pueent escouter
conme li asnes a harper.

(13-16)

The *roman antique* is often linked with the histories and chronicles, as if the two forms were more or less indistinguishable. It is true, as Paul Zumthor has observed, that "dans le vocabulaire des XIIe et XIIIe

- siècles . . . les termes *roman* et *estoire* . . . sont interchangeable." But is not quite true, as I hope to demonstrate in this study, that, in Zumthor's words, "*Le Roman de Brut* et *le Roman de Thèbes* . . . ne pourraient que très artificiellement être distingués" from the chronicles and histories (*Essai de poétique médiévale* [Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972], 348).
- 21 Zumthor writes: "Dans ces régions politiquement mieux structurées, une nouvelle classe seigneuriale commence à percevoir la nocivité de la guerre. L'éthique implicite de l'épopée est sentie comme artificielle, sinon intolérable. Clercs et chevaliers instruits aspirent à une sorte de désengagement de la parole poétique" (*Langue, texte, énigme* [Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1975], 242). See also R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval French Literature and Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).
 - 22 The summary of preconditions I give is essentially the one provided by Zumthor (*Langue*, 242).
 - 23 This is a characteristic of the *romans antiques* emphasized by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski in her important article, "Old French Narrative Genres: Towards the Definition of the *Roman Antique*," *RPh* 34 (1980-81), 143-59. See also Marie-Louise Ollier, "The Author in the Text: the Prologues of Chrétien de Troyes," *YFS* 51 (1974), 26-41.
 - 24 Alberic of Pisançon boldly and perhaps impudently announces this move in his *Alexandre* (c. 1130) as he pits the *solaz* of Antiquity against scriptural *contemptus mundi* in order to celebrate the worldly values of the ancients:

Dit Salomon, al premier pas,
Quant de son libre mot lo clas:
"Est vanitatum vanitas
Et universa vanitas."
Pyst lou me fay m'enfirmitas,
Toylle s'en otiositas!
Solaz nos faz' antiquitas
Que tot non sie vanitas!

(1-8)

(*The Medieval French Roman d'Alexandre*, ed. Alfred Foulet [Elliott Monographs, 38] [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949], 37-38.)

- 25 "Profilo Biografico," in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. Branca, vol. 1, 38-39.
- 26 See Vincenzo Crescini, *Contributo agli studi sul Boccaccio* (Turin: E. Loescher, 1887), ch. 9, Appendix; Alberto Limentani, "Boccaccio 'traduttore' di Stazio," *Rassegna della letteratura italiana*, ser. 7 (1960), 231-42; Egidio Gorra, *Testi inediti di Storia Troiana* (Turin: E. Loescher, 1887); Karl Young, *The Origin and Development of the Story of Troilus and Criseyde* (London: Kegan Paul, 1908; rpt. New York, 1968); Paolo Savj-Lopez, "Il *Filostrato* di G. Boccaccio," *Romania* 27 (1898), 442-79; Vincenzo Pernicone, "Il 'Filostrato' di Giovanni Boccaccio," *SFI* 2 (1929), 93-127; Maria Gozzi, "Sulle fonti del 'Filostrato,'" *Studi sul Boccaccio* 5 (1968), 123-209. For further bibliography, see Pernicone, "Il 'Filostrato,'" 93 n.; Vittore Branca (ed.) *Tutte le opere di Boccaccio: Filostrato*, 839ff.
- 27 In 1929 Vincenzo Pernicone argued that the "vera fonte" of the *Filostrato* is

- the author's own amorous relationship with Maria d'Aquino ("Il 'Filostrato'"): "E la storia di Giovanni e di Maria d'Aquino che ha creato la storia di Troilo e di Criseida" (106). Pernicone considered the source materials as affecting only the "carattere esteriore" of Boccaccio's poem (106).
- 28 As Gozzi puts it, "gli interventi operati dal poeta nella tradizione sono tanti e tali che sembra opportuno chiedersi se sia ancora lecito parlare di una semplice modificazione delle 'fonti', . . . o se il complesso di tali modificazioni non metta addirittura in dubbio la validità degli antecedenti indicati" ("Sulle fonti," 207).
- 29 On the subject of the *Filostrato*, for example, David Wallace writes: "whereas Chaucer had a copy of the *Filostrato* on his desk in composing his *Troilus*, it is not obvious that Boccaccio made systematic use of Benoît [de Sainte-Maure], Guido [delle Colonne] or of any author" (*Chaucer and the Early Writings of Boccaccio* [Woodbridge, Suffolk, and Dover, NH.: Brewer, 1985], 74).
- 30 See Vittore Branca, *Il cantare trecentesco e il Boccaccio del Filostrato e del Teseida* (Florence: Sansoni, 1936); C.S. Lewis, "What Chaucer Really Did," 56-75; David Wallace, *Chaucer and Boccaccio*, ch. 5; Donald R. Howard, *Chaucer* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1987), 346-47. For a sensible rebuttal of the argument that the *Filostrato* and the *Teseida* should be considered primarily as a product of the *cantare* tradition, see David Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale: Imitation of Classical Epic in Boccaccio's Teseida* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 92, n. 52: "The presence of the *cantari* among the sources of Boccaccio's works does not make them *cantari* in turn."
- 31 For a summary of scholarship on this subject, see David Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale*, 1-37.
- 32 See Robert Hollander, *Boccaccio's Two Venuses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977) and "The Validity of Boccaccio's Self-Exegesis in his *Teseida*," *Mc&H* n.s. 8 (1977), 163-83; Victoria Kirkham, "Chiuso parlare in Boccaccio's *Teseida*," in A.S. Bernardo and A. Pellegrini (eds.), *Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio: Studies in the Italian Trecento in Honor of Charles S. Singleton* (Binghamton, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1983), 305-51; Janet Levarie Smarr, "Boccaccio and the Stars: Astrology in the 'Teseida,'" *Traditio* 35 (1979), 303-32 and *Boccaccio and Fiammetta* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986).
- 33 See note 30 above. Anderson's careful study of the *Teseida* in relation to medieval ideas of the classical epic complements my own work. The question as to whether the epic or the *roman antique* is the dominant formal model depends upon which elements in the poem are emphasized. We must remember, however, that "epic" features and ethical interests had participated in the formation of the vernacular *roman antique* from its beginning in the twelfth century.
- 34 "Profilo," in Giovanni Boccaccio, *Tutte le opere*, ed. V. Branca, vol. I (Verona: Mondadori, 1967), 39.
- 35 "The *Canterbury Tales* I: Romance," in P. Boitani and J. Mann (eds.) *The Cambridge Chaucer Companion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 120.

- 36 *Ibid.*, 121. On the question of genre in the *Knights' Tale*, see also Robert Haller, "The *Knight's Tale* and the Epic Tradition," *ChauR* 1 (1966), 67–84; Paul A. Olson, "Chaucer's Epic Statement and the Political Milieu of the Late Fourteenth Century," *Mediaevalia* 5 (1979), 61–65, and *The Canterbury Tales and the Good Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 61–62; Robert W. Hanning, "The Struggle Between Noble Design and Chaos: the Literary Tradition of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*," *Literary Review* 23 (1980), 519–41; Helen Cooper, *The Structure of the Canterbury Tales* (London: Duckworth, 1983), 91–93; David Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale*, 192–224; and Winthrop Wetherbee, "Romance and Epic in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*," *Exemplaria* 2 (1990), 303–28. In addition, see note 40 below.
- 37 See especially Monica McAlpine, *The Genre of Troilus and Criseyde* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978).
- 38 *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity* (Cambridge and Totowa, N.J.: Rowan and Littlefield, 1982), 2. Minnis also includes the *Franklin's Tale* in his list, which I do not because it does not deal with the ancient matter of Greece and Rome and because it is not identified as a translation from a Latin authority. It does, however, share a number of thematic interests with the *romans antiques* and it involves the interweaving of materials from several learned Latin sources, including Boethius. See also A. Minnis, "From Medieval to Renaissance? Chaucer's Position on Past Gentility," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 72 (1986), 205–46.
- 39 Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity*, 2.
- 40 Northrop Frye wisely sets "medieval romance" aside in his wide-ranging study of naive and sentimental romance, acknowledging that it "presents different structural problems" from those he discovers in classical and post-medieval examples of "romance" (*Secular Scripture* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1976], 4). For efforts to offer definitions (or descriptions) of medieval romance in general, see Gillian Beer, *The Romance* (London: Methuen, 1970), and John Stevens, *Medieval Romance* (New York: Norton, 1973). On the difficulties of genre definition in relation to medieval romance, see W.T.H. Jackson, "The Nature of Romance," and R.M. Jordan, "Chaucerian Romance?" in *YFS* 51 (1974), 12–25, 223–34; Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969); Mark Amsler, "Literary Theory and the Genres of Middle English Literature," *Genre* 13 (1980), esp. 395–96; J. Burke Severs, "The Tales of Romance," in Beryl Rowland (ed.), *Companion to Chaucer Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 229–46; John Burrow, "The *Canterbury Tales* I," 109–24.
- 41 To be sure, in his *The Rise of Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), Eugene Vinaver has usefully described certain common features of "romance" in Chrétien de Troyes, the prose Vulgate cycle, and Malory's *Morte*. But he acknowledges that the features he discovers are those of "fiction" or "literature" generally. As he says: "The difficulty of defining romance lies mainly in the fact that its most important distinguishing feature is inseparable from what we normally understand by 'literature'" (15).

- 42 As Derek Pearsall has rightly observed: "Stories are the property of everyone, but a formal tradition is the property only of its practitioners, and it is through its formal and stylistic aspects – in combination with the others – that the history of romance can be most objectively analysed" ("The Development of Middle English Romance," *MS* 27 [1965], 96).
- 43 See H.R. Jauss, "Theory of Genres," 93.
- 44 For a sound and helpful defense of genre-definition as pragmatic and heuristic rather than essentialist, see Adena Rosmarin, *The Power of Genre* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), ch. 1.
- 45 Jauss, "Theory of Genres," 80.

I BENÔIT DE SAINTE-MAURE'S *ROMAN DE TROIE* AND THE
COMPOSITIONAL PRACTICES OF THE *ROMAN ANTIQUE*

- 1 In addition to the introductions to the editions of each of the *romans antiques* used for this book, the following studies have proved especially illuminating on the question of shared characteristics: Edmond Faral, *Recherches sur les sources latines des contes et romans courtois du moyen âge* (Paris: Champion, 1913; 1983); Alfred Adler, "Militia et amor in the *Roman de Troie*," *Romanische Forschungen* 72 (1960), 14–29; Pierre Gallais, "Recherches sur la mentalité des romanciers français du moyen âge," *CCM* 7 (1964), 479–93 and *CCM* 13 (1970), 333–47; Robert Marichal, "Naissance du roman," in M. Gandillac and E. Jeauneau (eds.), *Entretiens sur la Renaissance du XIIe siècle* (Paris and The Hague: Mouton, 1968), 449–82; Rosemarie Jones, *The Theme of Love in the Romans d'Antiquité* (London: MHRA, 1972); Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972) and "Genèse et évolution du genre," in Jean Frappier and R.R. Grimm (eds.), *Le Roman jusqu'à la fin du XIIIe siècle*, vol. 1, *Grundriss der Romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1978), 60–73; Marie-Louise Ollier, "The Author in the Text: the Prologues of Chrétien de Troyes," *YFS* 51 (1974), 26–41; Jean Frappier and G. Raynaud de Lage, "Les Romans antiques," in *Le Roman jusqu'à la fin du XIIIe siècle*, vol. 1 145–82; Michel Zink, "Une Mutation de la conscience littéraire: le langage romanesque à travers des exemples français du XIIe siècle," *CCM* 24 (1981), 3–27; Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "Old French Narrative Genres: towards the Definition of the *Roman Antique*," *RPh* 34 (1980–81), 143–59; Jean-Charles Huchet, *Le Roman médiéval* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984); and Aimé Petit, *Naissances du roman: les techniques littéraires dans les romans antiques du XIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris and Geneva: Champion-Slatkine, 1985). I came upon Aimé Petit's exhaustive and useful book only after I had nearly completed my own work, but my notes will indicate relevant parallels between his study and mine.
- 2 While Edmond Faral rightly argued that the *Roman de Troie* represents the fullest flowering of the *roman antique* in the twelfth century, he also claimed that Benoît had, at the same time, "atteint la limite des ses moyens" (*Recherches*, 417). He did not consider the uses Boccaccio and Chaucer made of

the formal possibilities initiated by Benoît and the other twelfth-century French *romanciers*.

- 3 *The Fantastic*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), 141.
- 4 Paris Bibliothèque Nationale, MS. fr. 60, fol. 1; Constans (ed.) *Roman de Troie*, VI, 21–22.
- 5 The biographical identity of Benoît de Sainte-Maure is nearly as mysterious as that of his principal source, Dares. Like Dares, Benoît names himself in his text and defends the nature of his authority as a writer. What is certain is that he was a clerk, educated in the liberal arts, writing in the third quarter of the twelfth century, for a court in the continental domain of King Henry II. We know too from his prologal testimony, that he was addressing an aristocratic audience at least some of whom “n’entendent la letre” (do not understand Latin) (38). On the identity of Benoît, see Gustav A. Beckmann, *Trojaroman und Normannenchronik: Die Identität der beiden Benoît und die Chronologie ihrer Werke* (Munich: Hueber, 1965).
- 6 “Naissances,” 458.
- 7 There is some disagreement among scholars as to whether Benoît meant by the noun *romanx*, which he uses in his prologue, anything more than a work composed in the vernacular. Michel Zink has argued that Benoît thought of his poem as a *roman* in something like our modern sense. Writing about Benoît’s discussion of *romanx* in the prologue to *Troie* (lines 32–39), he says: “En l’espace de deux vers, on passe du sens premier du mot [i.e., *romanx* as the vernacular language] à son sens moderne . . . ‘Mettre du latin en roman’, c’est traduire du latin en langue romane. Mais *se deduire el romanx* ce n’est pas prendre plaisir à la langue romane en tant que langue distincte de la langue latine. C’est prendre plaisir au roman” (“Conscience,” 10). While it seems to me unlikely that Benoît would have had any reason to make such a careful distinction in his prologue, the contours of his poem argue that he had a clear sense of what shape an artistic composition *en romanx* ought to have.
- 8 As late as the mid-thirteenth century, the word *livre* was associated with the instruction given by and to clerks from the precious books containing the texts and wisdom of the ancients. It is in this sense that Benoît uses the word in his prologue and composition. The field of connotations surrounding the word “livre” for Benoît and his contemporaries no doubt included a sense of the book’s monetary worth and relative scarcity as well as its moral value. In his treatise on the French language (c. 1250–60), Walter of Bibbesworth defined the word *livere* in the following way: “Vous avez . . . La livere [the pound] and le liv[e]re [the book] . . . / La livere sert de marchaundie, / Le livere nous aprent clergie” [*Le Traité de Walter de Bibbesworth sur la langue française*, ed. A. Owen (Paris, 1929; rept. Geneva Slatkine, 1977), 50–51; quoted by M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 151. St. Bonaventure gives an interesting definition of those kinds of *written* texts which are worth studying in a systematic way:

Sunt ergo quatuor genera scripturarum, circa quae oportet ordinate procedere et exerceri. Primi libri sunt sacrae scripturae, secundi libri sunt originalia sanctorum,

tertiis sententiae magistrorum, quarti doctrinarum mundialium sive philosophorum.
(*Collatio XIX in Hexameron in Opera* [Quarrachi ed.], v [1891], 421)

Benoit's source-*libri* would fall into the last category of books, that is, those containing worldly philosophical teaching, and he clearly designed his own *livre* to be a vernacular participant in this group. On the place and idea of the written book in the Middle Ages, see Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), and Jesse M. Gellrich, *The Idea of the Book in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985).

- 9 All references to the *Roman de Troie* in this study will be to the edition by Léopold Constans, *Le Roman de Troie*, 6 vols. (Paris: A. Joly, 1904-12).
- 10 As Penny Sullivan points out, "it is very hard to translate the term *bon dit* in this context." Quoting from the Prologue of Denis Piramus's *Vie Seint Edmund le rei*, she suggests that the phrase may mean a "form of fiction, intended primarily to entertain the aristocracy" ("Translation and Adaptation in the *Roman de Troie*," in Glynn S. Burgess and Robert A. Taylor (eds.), *The Spirit of the Court* [Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1985], 357, n. 19). Though the phrase may indeed include this wide and somewhat vague meaning, it must also refer, in a technical sense, to Benoit's formal arrangement and stylistic amplification of his received matter.
- 11 For a good summary discussion of these schoolroom ideas, see Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 2nd edn. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), esp. Ch. I, 1-39.
- 12 Ovid, for example, is described in one popular twelfth- or early-thirteenth-century *accessus* as a teacher of good conduct and extirpator of wicked behavior. Cf. R.W.B. Huygens (ed.), *Accessus ad auctores: Bernard of Utrecht, Conrad of Hirsau, Dialogus super auctores* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 29. Whether or not the *accessus* explicitly claimed expertise in all the liberal arts for individual authors, there was a general assumption that the *auctores* were trained especially in the language arts of the trivium. See, for example, Huygens, 25 (Maximianus), 26 (Theodolus), 27 (Arator), 47 (Boethius), 97 (Prudentius), 100 (Cicero), 110 (Lucan), 112 (Horace), and *passim*. Certain of the authors were also described as "*ingenio perspicacissimi*" (extremely perspicacious in the art of invention), a quality which seems to have been particularly important to early writers of romance. See, for example, Conrad of Hirsau's description of Horace (Huygens, *ibid.*, 112).
- 13 There is a world of difference between the *chansons* set down as an *aide-mémoire* for jongleurs or minstrels and the early *romans antiques*, even though the latter were certainly destined for oral presentation. For Benoit de Sainte-Maure and the other early romancers, the process of *writing* a text on rectangular, lined sheets of parchment, and making a composition in the manner of the ancients, took precedence over the demands of oral delivery, and this constitutes a crucial element in the definition of the new literary form.
- 14 On the *modus tractandi*, see Judson Allen, *The Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 67-116; Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory*, 119-45.

- 15 *Rise of Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 20.
- 16 Here I am using the word “text” in relation to its technical, pre-nineteenth century sense of “text-book,” meaning “A Classick Author written very wide by the students, to give Room for an Interpretation dictated by the Master” (Nathan Bailey, *Dictionarium Britannicum* [1730]).
- 17 The contents of the medieval school textbooks – or *libri manuales* as they were called – vary from volume to volume and century to century depending upon the interests of individual compilers and readers, as well as fashions in education. But the content is, as E.M. Sanford has put it, “somehow unified” (“The Use of Classical Latin Authors in the Libri Manuales,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 55 [1924], 190). Whether the canonical writers seem to speak as if in the “consonance of one voice” as Guido delle Colonne says of Dares and Dictys, or in several complementary voices, they are all regarded as “philosophers” – all teachers of the same wisdom.
- 18 Pierre Gallais was among the first to suggest the importance of studying the early vernacular poets’ use of clichés and commonplaces in their prologues. As he puts it, “Cette étude du détail infime, gratuit et à première vue inexpressif, peut jouer un rôle important dans l’analyse de toute œuvre humaine, artistique ou artisanale” (“Recherches,” 479).
- 19 When Dares appears in medieval *libri manuales*, he is often grouped with other historians. For example, in one twelfth- or early-thirteenth-century MS (Biblioteca Vaticana, Reg. Lat. 905), Dares is accompanied by the *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri*, Ademar’s *Chronicon*, Paul the Deacon’s *History of the Langobards*, Hugh of Fleury’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and a collection of geographical information. But the *De excidio Troiae* also appears in one manuscript together with the beginning of Ovid’s *Ars amatoria*, a commentary on *Aeneid* 11, an anonymous treatise on the fall of Troy, Juvenal, and Apollonius of Tyre (Florence, Bibl. Laur. Plut. 66., 40). Another manuscript includes the *De excidio* with Cicero’s *Academica* and *De natura deorum*. A twelfth-century Cistercian scribe adds Dares’ *De excidio* to a handbook of debates, disputations, and discourses on virtue and vice and religious truth and falsehood. One of the most common groupings in manuscripts from the twelfth century on yokes Dares with Julius Valerius’ *Deeds of Alexander*, Alexander’s Letters to Aristotle and Dindimus, and *Apollonius of Tyre*. Benoît’s own *collectio* of the *auctores* in his *romanz* – the narrative materials, speeches, literary forms, and commentary culled from the ancients – is considerably more ambitious, original, and systematic than the collections of most school anthologies. But at a fundamental level it partakes of the idea of the book projected both by individual texts taught in school and by the *libri manuales* as learned compilations.
- 20 “. . . orationum contextus, historiarum, commentariorum in unum corpus collectio vel de his similibus” (Huygens, *Accessus*, 74).
- 21 The story of Troy’s fall would naturally draw to itself lessons on worldly contempt, and Benoît is quick to assert the centrality of that large subject as

- one of his poem's shaping concerns. For the theme of *contemptus mundi* in twelfth-century school compilations, see Robert Bultot, "La *Chartula* et l'enseignement du mépris du monde dans les écoles et les universités médiévales," *Studi Medievali* 8 (1967), 787–834.
- 22 For visual images of Lady Fortune, see Pierre Courcelle, *La Consolation de philosophie dans la tradition littéraire* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1967).
- 23 *Medieval Theory*, 190–210.
- 24 *The Trojan War. The Chronicles of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian*, trans. R.M. Frazer, Jr. (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1966), 133. Though Cornelius' letter differs somewhat from manuscript to manuscript, it typically appears before the *De excidio* throughout the Middle Ages.
- 25 Pierre Gallais has argued that "l'acception 'trouver' = 'inventer, créer' est très rare dans les genres que nous examinons" and that "la formule *je truis* n'est pas fréquente dans les romans" ("Recherches," 343 and 344). But Benoît here seems to be describing the "finding" of matter both in a literal sense and in the rhetorical sense of "inventing" – the ingenious seeking out of *materia* suitable for literary composition.
- 26 For Benoît, the king's possessions define the extent of his power.
- 27 *Ars poetica*, 291–94. As Pseudoacro's commentary on these lines explains, "Ad unguem. Tractum a marmorariis, qui iuncturas marmorum ungue pertemptant . . . Ad unguem autem ad perfectionem, ad examen, hoc est: ad perfectum iudicium. Hoc ergo dicit: reprehendite, o Pisones, illud carmen, quod neque multum tempus neque litura correxit" (*Pseudoacronis Scholia in Horatium Vetustiora*, vol. II, ed. O. Keller [Leipzig: Teubner, 1904], 356–57).
- 28 Huygens, *Accessus*, 78. Bernard of Utrecht gives much the same description in his commentary on Theodolus (*ibid.*, 67).
- 29 For a more complex study of literary *matière* in medieval theory, though one that does not include the sense here discussed, see Douglas Kelly, "*Matière* and *genera dicendi* in Medieval Romance," *YFS* 51 (1974), 147–59.
- 30 Interestingly enough, the Greek *ύλη* originally meant "the wood found in the forests." This sense was gradually expanded to mean "wood" as the material used for building houses, and finally, the same word, *ύλη*, came to mean "every material out of which something can be made." Conrad's definition of *materia* seems to recall this etymology, however vestigially. For a discussion of the primitive Greek meaning of the word for "matter," see Norbert Luyten, OP, "Matter as Potency," in Ernán McMullin (ed.), *The Concept of Matter in Greek and Medieval Philosophy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963), 102. The same analogy between wood and literary matter seems at least partly responsible for Geoffrey of Vinsauf's well-known description of the poet's art of invention in the *Poetria Nova* (c. 1208–14):

Si quis habet fundare domum, non currit ad actum
 Impetuosa manus: intrinseca linea cordi
 Praemetitur opus . . .
 . . . et status ejus
 Est prius archetypus quam sensilis.

(43–45; 47–48)

Though Geoffrey does not explicitly mention wood in this analogy between domestic architecture and literary design, he is clearly inspired in part by a theory of matter and artistic design like Conrad's. When, two centuries later, Chaucer invokes (and plays with) Geoffrey's theory in his *Troilus*, he reintroduces the metaphor of wood. As his narrator says of Pandarus' artistic design in the matter of Troilus' love, "This tymbur is al redy up to frame" (III.530). As we shall see in chapter 6, Chaucer's interest in the intricate interplay between matter and form in *Troilus*, like Benoît's in *Troie*, is central to the design of his poem.

- 31 The problem of perspective or point of view in narrative is, as theorists well know, a thorny one. In the discussion that follows I take *perspective* to mean "focus of narration" or, to use Jean Genette's term, "focalization." The phrase "focus of narration" belongs to Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren who preferred it to "point of view" as a way of distinguishing between the character of the narrating "I" and the question of narrative orientation as it is focused through this or that perspective. See Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, *Understanding Poetry*, 4th edn. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1976), 589. On the term "focalization," see Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. J.E. Lewin (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1972), 186–89. For one of the most useful discussions I know on the subject of perspective, see Genette, *ibid.*, 185–210.
- 32 While scholars have generally been able to distinguish the early *romans antiques* from the *chansons de geste*, they have not so easily separated them from contemporary histories. Paul Zumthor, for example, writes of the relationship between *roman* and *estoire* in the mid-twelfth-century:

la narration historiographique ne diffère de la narration romanesque que (parfois) au niveau de la composition d'ensemble, les parties du "roman" s'intégrant mieux dans le tout; mais les séquences ou séries de séquences, "romanesques" ou "historiques," ont la même fonction textuelle, les mêmes règles d'enchaînement et emploient les mêmes moyens verbaux; cela au moins jusque vers la fin du XIII^e siècle, mais Froissart encore, dans ses *Chroniques*, n'est pas affranchi du modèle romanesque: bien plus, il s'y réfère à dessein. (*Essai*, 348)

By contrast, I give a great deal more weight than Zumthor does to the "niveau de la composition d'ensemble" which seems to me to make a significant formal difference between the *romans antiques* and vernacular histories of the same period. For further discussion of these issues, see Stephen Nichols, "Discourse in Froissart's *Chroniques*," *Speculum* 39 (1964), 279–87, and Zumthor, "Roman et histoire," in *Langue, Texte, Enigme* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1975), 237–48.

- 33 For a brilliant and useful discussion of the difference between *perspectiva* in its medieval and renaissance senses, see Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), 3–7. See also Miriam Bunim, *Space in Medieval Painting and the Forerunners of Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940).
- 34 On these distinctions, see Käte Hamburger, *The Logic of Literature*, trans. M.J. Rose (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1973), 55–56;

- Jean Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 162–70; Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978), 32.
- 35 The translation is Brault's. All references to the *Chanson de Roland* will be to the edition by Gerard Brault, *The Song of Roland* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978).
- 36 "Structure et sens du *Roman de Thèbes*," *MA* 76 (1970), 499.
- 37 See, for example, the illustration in the St. Alban's Psalter, in which David the Psalmist points his finger at the central action of Psalm 93 (Otto Pächt and C.R. Dodwell, *The Saint Alban's Psalter* [London: Warburg Institute, 1960], Plate 69a).
- 38 Both the *Eneas*-poet and Benoît approach the inner lives and outer circumstances of their characters in a way that parallels, at least to some extent, the concerns of eleventh- and twelfth century scriptural exegetes. Odilo of Cluny (d. 1049), for example, in a sermon for the feast of the Assumption, asks just the kinds of questions Benoît also poses as he creates his scenes and probes his ancient characters' minds. Odilo, meditating on the situation of the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation at the moment before the Angel Gabriel appears to her, wonders: "Ubi erat . . . quando a Domino mittebatur angelus ad eam? . . . Quid agebat? . . . orabat, legebat. Quomodo orabat? . . . Quid legebat?" (*PL* 142, 1024A–B). Such detailed imagination of scriptural events as human drama was new in the twelfth century and it coincides in important ways with the *Eneas*-poet and Benoît's parallel concern for dramatic "realism" as they portray the lives and minds of their characters. Both the exegete and the poets seem concerned to understand the *human* continuity as well as the differences between their own cultural situation and that of an imagined, distant, but important past.
- 39 *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd edn. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 164.
- 40 Charles Muscatine was the first to argue in detail that the meaning of *Troilus* is "coextensive with" its stylistic heterogeneity. See his *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 124–65.
- 41 On the social pressures constructing Criseyde's speech, thought, and life, see David Aers's valuable study, *Chaucer, Langland, and the Creative Imagination* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980). Stephen Knight's subsequent argument about Criseyde as a "remarkably realized women" (*Geoffrey Chaucer* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986]) is less persuasive than Aers's because he takes no account of literary form or tradition. If Criseyde is "a figure of a new self-consciousness for both men and women" (35–36), she is also the product of a long literary tradition, stemming ultimately from Ovid's *Heroides*. Chaucer develops his heroine more fully than Boccaccio had and along new lines. But Benoît de Sainte-Maure, borrowing from Paris and Helen's Ovidian letters, had already made his Briseida a self-conscious character seeking her own pleasure in the private sphere. We can most effectively see what is "new" about Criseyde by comparing her with her direct literary predecessors.
- 42 Benoît may have drawn part of his inspiration for this sort of narration from classical epic. Statius, for example, in his *Thebaid*, describes the Argive

- widows being watched and pitied as they make their way into Athens (*Thebaid*, xii, 464-74).
- 43 *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), 85-157.
- 44 One thinks, for example, of Chrétien de Troyes' Perceval, the untutored rustic, who begins his (and our) quest for proper understanding of "kighthood" by *seeing* and marveling at knights whom he encounters in the woods. Chrétien leads us into the poem's deepest questions through what Perceval sees and what he fails to see.
- 45 "Puis que li mondes comença/ Ne ja mais tant come il durra,/ N'iert mais veüe tel compaigne."
- 46 This was a matter of debate as the prologue to Alberic of Pisançon's *Alexandre* attests. But the clerkly authors of the early *romans antiques* clearly defended the importance of the classical writers for the passing on of secular wisdom.
- 47 "Note on the Poetic and the Empirical 'I' in Medieval Authors," *Traditio* 4 (1946), 414-22.
- 48 For a fuller discussion of this subject, see my article, "'A Poet Ther Was': Chaucer's Voices in the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*," *PMLA* 101 (1986), 154-69, and esp. 156-58.
- 49 Huygens (ed.), *Dialogus*, 108.
- 50 It is interesting to note that Jean de Meun repeats this theory of multiple voicing in the prologue to his translation of Boethius' *Consolation*. See V.L. Dedek-Héry (ed.), "Boethius' *De consolacione* by Jean de Meun," *MS* 14 (1952), 171.
- 51 Servius, *In Vergilii carmina commentarii*, ed. G. Thilo and H. Hagen, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1897), I, 4 (my translation).
- 52 "What is an Author?" in J.V. Harari (ed.), *Textual Strategies* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1979), 142.
- 53 For an excellent discussion of the audience for the French *romans antiques*, see Marichal, "Naissance," 460-63. An hour's lecture of the *Roman de Troie* would have covered only about 1,250 lines. Depending on a given audience's capacity, we may assume that a reading of the whole work (somewhat more than 30,000 lines) would have taken anywhere from ten days to a month to complete, if we count on one session of one or two hours a day. For the importance of the *récit* as opposed to the *chant* in the formation of the *romans* as a genre, see Zumthor, *Essai*, 339-45.

2 PLAITS, DEBATES, AND JUDGMENTS IN THE ROMAN DE THÈBES,
THE ROMAN DE TROIE, AND THE ROMAN D'ÉNEAS

- 1 *Le Roman de Thèbes*, ed. Guy Raynaud de Lage, 2 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1966-68), lines 7793-94. All references to the *Roman de Thèbes* will be to this edition. MS C, which provides the basis for Raynaud de Lage's edition is generally considered to be earlier than the versions represented by MSS A and P. For discussion of the shorter and longer versions of *Thèbes*, see Raynaud de

- Lage, vol. 1, v–ix; Léopold Constans (ed.), *Le Roman de Thèbes*, vol. 2 (Paris: Didot, 1890), ii–xxiv.
- 2 In his important study of French literature and law, R. Howard Bloch has called much needed attention to the close relationships between legal and literary forms in the twelfth century. He has also argued persuasively that “literary disputation and deposition” constitute “structuring principles of [Old French] lyric and romance” (*Medieval French Literature and Law* [Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1977], 164). At the same time, Wesley Trimpi, Joel Altman, John Alford, and others have shown how fully the academic *quaestio* entered into the making of medieval and early renaissance literature. Their studies provide a valuable complement to the subject of this chapter.
- 3 Biblioteca Laurenziana MS LXIV, 35. Alberic’s poem appears on ff. 115v–116r. The *Alexandre* has been edited by A. Foulet, *The Medieval French Roman d’Alexandre*, III (Elliott Monographs, 38), Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1949), 37–60.
- 4 The debate over genre with regard to Alberic’s poem is a lively one. See G. Raynaud de Lage, “Les Romans antiques et la représentation de l’Antiquité,” *MA* 67 (1961), 250–51; Aurelio Roncaglia, “L’*Alexandre* d’Alberic et la séparation entre chanson de geste et roman,” in *Chanson de Geste und höfischer Roman* (Heidelberg, Winter 1963), 37–52; Aimé Petit, *Naissances du roman: les techniques littéraires dans les romans antiques du XIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1985), 7–15 and *passim*.
- 5 See also Biblioteca Laurenziana MS Plut.64.35, f. 24v; f. (35v); f. 45r; f. 52r; f. (53v); f. 86r; f. (114v).
- 6 *PL* 139, 1150.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *PL.*, 190, 106.
- 9 “The Quality of Fiction: the Rhetorical Transmission of Literary Theory,” *Traditio* 30 (1974), esp. 61–97.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 83.
- 11 As Alexandre Micha has shown, “dans toutes [les chansons de geste] . . . sauf exception, le discours [collectif] est bref, de un à six vers, huit au maximum. C’est là un trait commun qui oppose la chanson de geste au roman où, dans l’ensemble, les discours seront moins nombreux, mais plus longs” (“Le Discours collectif dans l’épopée et dans le roman,” in *Mélanges de langue et de littérature du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts à Frappier* [Geneva: Droz, 1970], vol. II, 815). See also Petit, *Naissances*, I, ch. 8; L.G. Donovan, *Recherches sur le Roman de Thèbes* (Paris: Société d’Enseignement Supérieur, 1975), 203–13.
- 12 For a list of those *chansons de geste* that precede the writing of the *Roman de Thèbes*, the earliest of the *romans antiques* (c. 1150), see Donovan, *Recherches*, 203, n. 62. On the rapport between the *chansons de geste* and the *romans antiques*, see Alexandre Micha, “Couleur épique dans le *Roman de Thèbes*,” *Romania* 91 (1970), 145–60; Payen, “Structure et sens”; Omer Jodogne, “Le Caractère des œuvres ‘antiques’ dans la littérature française du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle,” in

- L'Humanisme médiéval dans les littératures romanes du XIIe au XIVe siècle* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1964), 55-104; E. Hoepfner, "La Chanson de geste et les débuts du roman courtois," in *Mélanges de linguistique et de littérature offerts à Alfred Jeanroy* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1972), 427-37; J.-J. Salverda de Grave, "Recherches sur les sources du *Roman de Thèbes*," in *Mélanges Maurice Wilmotte* (Paris: Champion, 1910), vol. II, 596-618. For important differences, see Donovan, *Recherches*, 200-13.
- 13 The *chansons de geste*, and particularly the *Chanson de Roland*, which is the oldest extant French epic, bear precious witness to the nature of the councils and trials characteristic of the Carolingian court. Verbal duels and deliberative or forensic debate are among the most important structural features of the *Roland*. As Joseph Duggan puts it, "the *Chanson de Roland* is as much a work of council scenes, legal proceedings and dialogue on the field of battle as a work of physical combat" (*The Song of Roland: Formulaic Style and Poetic Craft* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973], 113).
 - 14 For the meanings of *plait* (Lat. *placitum*), see Domino Du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, vol. VI (Niort: L. Favre, 1886), 342-47; see also Adhémar Esmein, *Cours élémentaire d'histoire du droit français*, 15th edition (Paris: Sirey, 1925), 64-68 and *passim*; and Wilhelm Tavernier, "Vom Rolandsdichter," *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie*, 38 (1914), 412-46.
 - 15 In the *Roland*, as in most *chansons de geste*, the quarrels are both familial and political. See Eugene Dorfman, *The Narreme in the Medieval Romance Epic* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973) for an excellent analysis of family quarrels in the *Roland*.
 - 16 T. Atkinson Jenkins (ed.), *La Chanson de Roland* (Boston: Heath, 1924), 265 n.
 - 17 The *Roland* may also preserve vestiges of pre-Carolingian judicial forms if Esmein is right in finding signs of the Germanic *mallus* in Ganelon's trial. For a discussion of this possibility, see Esmein, *Cours élémentaire*, 359 n.
 - 18 *Ibid.*, 406.
 - 19 *Medieval French Literature and Law*, 3.
 - 20 By no coincidence, such public debate was also a key activity in the feudal courts of contemporary England and Normandy in a period of great contention between the barons and their royal lords.
 - 21 "Parleor" is defined by Constans (vol. V) as "salle de conversation" (243). Yet the term, used by Wace (1155), seems to apply specifically not to the modern-day parlor or living room, but to public rooms or halls designated for royal councils - "parliament rooms" in which noble advisors to the king debated important issues and conducted trials.
 - 22 All references to the *Eneas* are to the edition by J.-J. Salverda de Grave, *Eneas*, 2 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1925-29).
 - 23 Edmond Faral suggested that the *Eneas*-poet may have drawn details for his *capitoille* from the *Seven Wonders of the World*. The descriptions of the Roman *Capitolium* and of the *Theatrum* in Heraclea may both have furnished the French poet with materials (*Recherches sur les sources latines des contes et romans courtois du Moyen Age* [Paris, Champion, 1913; 1983], 77-79).
 - 24 These details come from the Latin *Iliad* in the description of Achilles' buckler.

- 25 Petit, *Naissances*, II, 1210–11.
- 26 In his study of the *Roman de Thèbes*, Donovan likewise calls attention to the individualization of speakers as a distinguishing feature of the early *romans antiques* (*Recherches*, 104–5).
- 27 For a valuable discussion of the proto-Christian character of the debate surrounding Amphiaras' death, see Payen, "Structure et sens," 507–10.
- 28 The episode of Daire le Roux, which appears in all versions of the poem, is, as far as we know, entirely the poet's invention. It has no precedent in Statius' *Thebaid*, the principal source for *Thèbes*. In the longer versions of the poem, represented by MSS A and P, the trial itself is more than doubled in length, occupying 2,400 lines and more. While I consider here the trial as it appears in the earliest complete manuscript of the poem (MS C), the great extension of the debate in MSS A and P cannot fail to interest us. It clearly reflects that same clerkly delight in subtle, learned contention on problematic ethical questions which explains the appearance of Daire's trial in the earliest version of *Thèbes*. Constans has included the additions to the shorter version in MSS A and P in vol. II of his edition, Appendices III–V, 106–306.
- 29 Donovan has already observed important differences between Ganelon's trial and Daire's, and my analysis is indebted to his study. See his very useful *Recherches*, 206–13.
- 30 In addition to the studies mentioned in notes 2 and 9, see James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: a History of Rhetorical Theory from St. Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).
- 31 The situation is further complicated by the son's duplicity. He lies to his parents when they ask him about his imprisonment. He tells them that it is "fiere" and that he would rather die than return to prison, when in fact Polynices has treated him well.
- 32 The narrator has already framed the episode of the council with a dire prediction. "L'endemein," he says, "vet Daires a cort;/ feruz sera ainz qu'il s'en tort,/ tristres, marriz, car tel plet mut/ par quoi entr'eus grant ire crut". (The next day Daire goes to court. Before he returns, he will have made [the king] sad, angry, for he brought forward such a case that a great anger arose between them.) (lines 749ff.).
- 33 The stratagem of undermining the foundations of fortified walls is a classical one, which reappears in medieval discussions of war tactics. See Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris*, ed. C. Lang (Leipzig: Teubner, 1869), IV, 24, 144; Aegidius Romanus, *De regimine principum*, III, iii, 602–3. Boccaccio has his Teseo use the threat of undermining Ipolita's fortifications to win his war against her in the *Teseida*.
- 34 In MS A's version of the trial, the number of speakers and speeches is greatly increased and several of the speakers are described as trained in the seven arts, "bien doctrinez."
- 35 Daire's trial, as an essentially fictive, playful model of a judicial procedure, participates not so much in epic tradition as in the rhetorical exercises of the medieval classroom. These exercises, which are fully described by Quintilian in Book III of his very well-known *Institutio oratoria*, were certainly practiced

by medieval students. According to Quintilian the *quaestiones* to be taken up and debated by would-be orators might concern matters of expediency or honor or crime. Usually, he says, all three kinds of question are involved whether the case considered is civil or criminal or philosophical (III, iv, 12-16; Loeb, 394-97). The *Thèbes*-poet not only introduces complex hypothetical questions, or *quaestiones coniunctae*, in Daire's trial; he also follows classical rhetorical rules in developing the arguments on both sides of the case. Furthermore, the form of the model trial gives the poet ample opportunity to practice impersonation, which Quintilian identifies as "the most difficult of tasks." Yet, as he says, it is "of the greatest use to future poets and historians" (III, viii, 49-51; Loeb, 502-5). The *Eneas*-poet and Benoît de Sainte-Maure fully extend their imaginative powers of characterization in the service of dramatized dialogue and debate, but the tendencies are already clearly apparent in the work of the *Thèbes*-poet.

- 36 In Appendix IV of his study, Aimé Petit gives a list of the thirty-one councils and six embassies (*Naissances*, II, 1213-17). J.L. Levenson, however, who was the first to emphasize the importance of the councils in *Troie*, counts "approximately fifty incidents of counsel" ("The Narrative Format of Benoît's *Roman de Troie*," *Romania* 100 [1979], 56). As he points out, "Consultation accounts for nearly everything that occurs" (*ibid.*). Levenson's count reflects more fully than Petit's the very extensive development of various forms of political and personal debate in *Troie*.
- 37 As Levenson says, "Benoît arranges events in a sequence of causes and effects, of deliberations which almost always result in disorder: plunder, rape, warfare, treachery, and the ruin of a civilization" ("The Narrative Format," 55).
- 38 The account in Dares is as follows:

Then Alexander [Paris] began to exhort them. They must build a fleet and go against Greece. If his father wished, he would take charge of this venture; he would conquer the enemy and return from Greece with great renown. There was reason to believe that the gods would aid him, for, while hunting in the woods on Mount Ida, he had fallen asleep and dreamt as follows: Mercury brought Juno, Venus, and Minerva to him to judge of their beauty. Then Venus promised, if he judged her most beautiful, to give him in marriage whoever was deemed the loveliest woman in Greece. Thus, finally, on hearing Venus' promise, he judged her most beautiful.

(R.M. Frazer, Jr., trans. *The Trojan War: the Chronicles of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian* [Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1966], 138-39)

- 39 On this aspect of romance, see Patricia A. Parker, *Inescapable Romance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), ch. 1.
- 40 In Dares and Benoît alike, Mercury serves a function also assigned to him by several medieval commentators. As a representative of "rhetoris sermo," he mediates the "venenosas . . . litigationes" of adversaries (Vat. Myth. II, 215).
- 41 Benoît, like certain of his contemporaries, including Geoffrey of Monmouth, has a great interest in voices of prophecy representing a "higher" truth. Moreover, such prophetic voices are often not heeded by those who most need them.

- 42 We find one of the richest examples of such doubleness in Benoît's account of the Greek Achilles' love for Polixena. As Benoît shows his audience, Achilles actually seeks to end the war because he wants to marry Polixena, who is the Trojan king Priam's daughter. While Dares, in the *De excidio*, has his Achilles, burning with passion, simply ask "anyone and everyone" to end the war, Benoît (through Achilles) characteristically initiates a formal public council. What decides the issue here, and in Benoît's *parlements* generally, is not the "truth" of the matter – Achilles never reveals his true intention – but the judgment of those listening. The Greeks in council finally choose epic values and the continuation of the war. The narrator in this situation simply confirms their judgment: "N'i a si juevnes ne si vieux/ Qui ço ne lot, quel cuer qu'il ait./ Que vos en fereie autre plait?" (There is no one either young or old, who would not advise this, whatever his opinion might be. Should I make any other case to you about it?) (18400–2).
- 43 The rhetorical handbooks of the arts curriculum would have labeled a composition such as Benoît's a "controversia conjuncta."
- 44 For a list of these councils and embassies, see Petit, *Naissances*, II, Appendix IV, 1212–13. Two of the seven councils in the *Eneas* have no parallel in the *Aeneid*, and two of them are based on non-conciliar scenes in the Latin poem.
- 45 The term *proces*, describing Pandarus' "courtship" of Criseyde, has, I believe, legal overtones and refers to the carefully calculated arguments Pandarus devises in pleading Troilus' case of love. See *MED*, 7 (1952), 3c, p. 1350. Similarly, when Pandarus delivers his *proces* against Polifete, the term describes a quasi-legal attack of the kind a prosecutor might use in court. For a different but not uncomplementary interpretation of the term, see Siegfried Wenzel, who traces *proces* to the technical language of handbooks on preaching ("Chaucer and the Language of Contemporary Preaching," *Speculum* 73 [1976], 152–54).
- 46 The word *parlement* appears nine times in Book IV of *Troilus*, while in his corpus as a whole it is used only fifteen times (excluding the title of the *Parlement of Foules*). Not surprisingly, three of its other appearances are in the *Knight's Tale*, Chaucer's other *roman antique*.

3 THE POETICS OF FINE AMOR IN THE FRENCH ROMANS ANTIQUES

- 1 "Vues sur les conceptions courtoises dans les littératures d'oc et d'oïl au XIIe siècle," *CCM* 2 (1959), 135. See also Daniel Poirion, "De l'Énéide à l'Eneas: mythologie et moralisation," *CCM* 19 (1976), 224.
- 2 The classic study on this subject is Edmond Faral's, *Recherches sur les sources latines des contes et romans courtois du Moyen Age* (Paris: Champion, 1913; 1983). See especially chapter 3, "Ovide et quelques autres sources du Roman d'Énéas," 73–157. Other important early studies of Ovid's influence on the *romans antiques* include J.-J. Salverda de Grave's introduction to his critical edition of the *Eneas* (Bibliotheca Normannica, IV) (Halle: Niemeyer, 1891); F.M. Warren, "On the Latin Sources of *Thèbes* and *Énéas*," *PMLA* 16 (1901), 375–87; Karl Heyl, *Die Theorie der Minne in den ältesten Minneromanen*

- Frankreichs* (Marburger Beiträge zur romanischen Philologie, ed. E. Wechsler, vol. IV), 1911; A. Dressler, *Der Einfluss des altfranzösischen Eneas-Romanes auf die altfranzösischen Literatur* (Borna, Leipzig: Robert Noske, 1907). Among more recent studies, three have proved particularly helpful to me on the subject of love and the *romans antiques*: Jean Frappier, "Vues sur les conceptions courtoises," 135-56; Rosemarie Jones, *The Theme of Love in the Romans d'Antiquité* (London: MHRA, 1972); and Daniel Poirion, "De l'Énéide à l'Eneas." Other useful work on love in the *romans antiques* includes R.M. Lumiansky, "Structural Unity in Benoît's *Roman de Troie*," *Romania* 79 (1958), 410-24; H.C.R. Laurie, "Eneas and the Doctrine of Courtly Love," *MLR* 64 (1969), 283-94; and R.J. Cormier, *One Heart One Mind: the Rebirth of Virgil's Hero in Medieval French Romance* (University, Miss.: Romance Monographs, 1973).
- 3 "Militia et amor in the *Roman de Troie*," *Romanische Forschungen* 72 (1960), 14-29.
 - 4 Lumiansky, "Structural Unity," 423-24. Lumiansky was one of the first scholars to insist on the "coherent continuity and unity" of each of the love stories (424) and also their participation in the poem's larger design. But he did not specify the precise moral and thematic contours of that participation and concentrated rather on the psychological interest of the love affairs.
 - 5 This is Rosemarie Jones's conclusion in her useful study, *The Theme of Love*, 59.
 - 6 Frappier attributes to his student, Moshé Lazar, the clarification of the nature of *fine amor* among the troubadours as distinct from the different definitions of the same phrase among the northern romancers. See Lazar, *Amour Courtois et 'fin' amors' dans la littérature du XIIe siècle* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1964).
 - 7 "Vues sur les conceptions courtoises," 144.
 - 8 In the case of the *Heroides*, there are even examples of commentaries which appear without the poems, for example, those in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek MS clm. 19475 and UC Berkeley, MS UCB 95.
 - 9 D.W. Robertson, Jr., in his influential *Preface to Chaucer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), suggested that all serious medieval poetry concerning love is grounded in precisely this opposition. Robertson's views concerning "courtly love" and the place of secular love in medieval poetry are well represented in his *Preface* and in two essays: "The Subject of the *De amore* of Andreas Capellanus," *MP* 50 (1953), 145-61; and "The Concept of Courtly Love as an Impediment to the Understanding of Medieval Texts," in F.X. Newman (ed.), *The Meaning of Courtly Love* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1968), 1-18.
 - 10 In his influential discussion of "courtly love," C.S. Lewis failed to distinguish the troubadours' "religion of love" from the northern French romancers' quite different treatments of love. Consequently, he considered Chrétien de Troyes's poems juxtaposing *fine amor* and marriage "strangely archaic," while *Lancelot* is, in his view, the only one of Chrétien's works to reflect the "new ideals of love" (26). For Lewis's position, see *The Allegory of Love* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958; first publ. 1936), 1-43.

- 11 A small number of important studies in recent years have focused on the subject of love and marriage in medieval courtly poetry in ways that are complementary to my own. See especially Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Love and Marriage in the Age of Chaucer* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), and William Calin, "Defense and Illustration of *Fin'Amor*. Some Polemical Comments on the Robertsonian Approach," in N.B. Smith and J.T. Snow (eds.), *The Expansion and Transformations of Courtly Literature*, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1980), 32-48.
- 12 Fortunately, several scholars in this century have brought to light medieval commentaries on Ovid's love poems. Most recently, Ralph J. Hexter (*Ovid and Medieval Schooling* [Munich: Arbedo-Gesellschaft, 1986]) has provided important new information concerning medieval glosses on the *Heroides*. The bibliography on Ovid's place in the medieval schools is extensive. Among the studies I have found most useful are the following: E.K. Rand, *Ovid and his Influence* (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1925); Fausto Ghisalberti, "Mediaeval Biographies of Ovid," *JWCI* 9 (1946), 10-59; Ghisalberti, "Arnolfo d'Orleans. Un cultore di Ovidio nel secolo XII," in *Memorie del Reale Istituto Lombardo di Scienze e Lettere* (Classe Lettere, xxiv), fasc. iv (Milan: Hoepli, 1932), 157-234; Lucia Rosa, "Su alcuni commenti inediti alle opere di Ovidio," *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università di Napoli* 5 (1955), 191-231; E. Pellegrin, "Les 'Remedia amoris' d'Ovide, Texte scolaire médiéval," *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes*, 115 (1957 [Paris, 1958]), 172-79; S. Battaglia, "La tradizione di Ovidio nel medioevo," *Filologia Romanza* 6 (1959), 185-224; E.H. Alton, "Ovid in the Mediaeval Schoolroom," *Hermathena* 94 (1960), 21-38; 95 (1961), 67-82; F. Munari, *Ovid im Mittelalter* (Zurich and Stuttgart: Artemis, 1960); R.B.C. Huygens (ed.), *Accessus ad auctores. Bernard of Utrecht. Conrad of Hirsau, Dialogus super auctores* (Leiden: Brill, 1970); J. McGregor, "Ovid at School: from the Ninth to the Fifteenth Century," *Classical Folia* 32 (1978), 29-51. For further references, see Hexter, *Ovid*, 316-23.
- 13 On the character of the several monologues in *Eneas* and *Troie*, see also Aimé Petit, *Naissances du roman: les techniques littéraires dans les romans antiques du XIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1985), 1, 582-607.
- 14 On this subject, see Jean Frappier, "Vues sur les conceptions courtoises," 141.
- 15 "Le Concept de l'amour dans les romans arthuriens," in *Amour courtois et table ronde* (Geneva: Droz, 1973), 46.
- 16 A. Ewert, in his edition of *Tristan* places Beroul's poem in the last decade of the twelfth century (vol. II, Oxford: Blackwell, 1970, 33-36).
- 17 See especially Jones, *The Theme of Love*, 30-40; Giovanna Angeli, *L'"Eneas" e i primi romanzi volgari* (Milan and Naples: Ricciardi, 1971), 107-14; Daniel Poirion, "De l'Enéide à l'Eneas," 213-29; Lee Patterson, "Virgil and the Historical Consciousness of the Twelfth Century: the *Roman d'Eneas* and *Erec et Enide*," in his *Negotiating the Past* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), esp. 181 and 191; Jean-Charles Huchet, *Le Roman médiéval*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984), 111-50.

- 18 *Le Roman médiéval*, p. 19.
- 19 Alain of Lille calls Ovid “amorigraphus” (*Summa de arte praedicatoria*, ch. 36, PL 210, 180; Hexter, *Ovid*, 17). For discussion of Ovid’s place in the classroom, see Hexter, *Ovid*.
- 20 Faral (*Recherches*, 114–49) noted several reminiscences of the *Heroides* in the *Eneas*, but he did not examine his observations in relation to the poem’s structure. Moreover, he did not focus on most of the details examined in my own study. His suggestions of influence include the following: the epitaph on Dido’s tomb (*Her.* xiv.129; vii.195); the *Eneas*-poet’s warning that lovers will always be in doubt and fear (*Her.* i.12; *Her.* xviii.109); Lavine’s need for a confidant (*Her.* xi.33ff.; xviii.19ff.; xx.17ff.). He also notes that most of the physical symptoms of love described in Ovid’s other amatory works also appear in many of the *Heroides*, together with the image of the god of love, and the idea that lovers will die because of their passion (134–49). For a sympathetic recent study of the *Heroides*, see Florence Verducci, *Ovid’s Toyshop of the Heart* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).
- 21 *The Theme of Love*, 30. Three important exceptions to this tendency are to be found in studies by Daniel Poirion (“De l’*Enéide* à l’*Eneas*”), Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski (“Old French Narrative Genres”), and Jean-Charles Huchet (*Le Roman médiéval*).
- 22 This is a point recently argued by Blumenfeld-Kosinski, “Old-French Narrative Genres: Towards the Definition of the *Roman Antique*,” *RPh* 34 (1980–81), 150. Daniel Poirion (“L’*Écriture épique: du sublime au symbole*,” *Relire le “Roman d’*Enéas*”* [Paris: Champion, 1985]) also assumes that the first twenty-four lines of the *Eneas* comprise a prologue. Several critics, however, have considered the opening sequence abrupt and without clear point. See, for example, Angeli, *L’“Eneas,”* 105–6.
- 23 In his influential commentary, Servius suggests Virgil’s use (following Horace in the *Ars poetica*) of an artificial order at the beginning of the *Aeneid* (G. Thilo [ed.], *In Vergilii Aeneidos* [Leipzig: Teubner, 1878] I, 1, 6). In his twelfth-century gloss, Bernard Silvester expands Servius’ observation, describing the classical poet’s method in medieval rhetorical terms (*The Commentary on the First Six Books of the Aeneid of Vergil Commonly Attributed to Bernardus Silvestris*, ed. J.W. Jones and E.F. Jones [Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1977], 1–2). For the position that the *Eneas*-poet made a “‘natural’ start” and thereby simplified his source, see Raymond Cormier, *One Heart One Mind*, 81. Blumenfeld-Kosinski (“Old French Narrative Genres”) argues instead that the *Eneas*-poet introduces the *ordo naturalis* in order to “[signal] to us that the first part of the romance will constitute an exemplification of creative activity . . . He makes it clear from the very start that his *translatio* will be a creative adaptation of Virgil” (150).
- 24 The syntax of this phrase allows two different readings of the Old French, and the poet seems to encourage a certain ambiguity. In fact, the wrong was done to Menelaus by his wife, who left her legitimate husband, but also by Paris who shamed and dishonored the Greek king by stealing his lawful wife. The poet tends to focus more on Paris than Helen as the cause of Menelaus’ shame by providing a full account of the fateful Judgment of Paris (99–182).

- 25 As Daniel Poirion has rightly pointed out (“L’Ecriture,” x), Virgil had already suggested an identification between Paris and Aeneas in his relationship with Dido (*Aeneid* IV.215–17). But the *Eneas*-poet greatly elaborates this connection.
- 26 Barbara Nolan, “The Judgment of Paris in the *Roman d’Eneas*: a New Look at Sources and Significance,” *Classical Bulletin* 56 (1980), 52–56.
- 27 Edmond Faral was the first to explore the sources of the *Eneas*-poet’s Judgment story (“Le Récit du Jugement de Paris dans l’*Enéas* et ses sources,” *Romania* 41 [1912], 100–2). Most scholars, including Huchet, follow Faral. (For Huchet’s discussion, see *Le Roman médiéval*, 40–41). In fact, however, the Norman poet’s account is close to that of the first Vatican Mythographer and also to glosses to be found in twelfth-century *Aeneid* MSS, for example, in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS Lat. 7930, fol. 57v; and Vatican MS Reg. Lat. 1563, fol. 35v.
- 28 Of course, it is also possible that the *Eneas*-poet had ready to hand a gloss on *Aeneid*, I, 24–26, which combined elements from the usual account (well-typified in the story given in Vatican Mythographer 1) with those represented by Ovid and Hyginus. Interestingly enough, we can find a parallel example of this combination in the twelfth-century gloss on *Heroides* XVI recently edited by Hexter (*Ovid and Medieval Schooling*). As Hexter says, “Unusually, the compiler has created his own version of the introduction to this letter” (282, n. 226). His story, placed at the beginning of *Heroides* XVI, corresponds to the accounts most common in *Aeneid*-glosses, though it, like the passage in the *Eneas*, also includes details from Ovid’s version. He tells the story of the golden apple, the inscription, and the goddesses’ “litigium.” Then, he gives as the bribes “regnum,” “gloriam, uel ut quidam dicunt sapientiam,” and “pul[chr]e coniugis amorem” (kingdom, glory, or, as some say wisdom, and the love of a beautiful woman). In his account, the bribes of all three goddesses correspond to Ovid, though “gloriam” is not “virtutem” but rather the reward of “virtutem,” and he adds “sapientiam.”
- 29 See note 27.
- 30 The poet might, however, have drawn the same detail from some version of the story derived from the tradition of Hyginus, whose Pallas offers Paris skill in every craft as well as the possibility of being the bravest of mortals. Yet Ovid seems, on the face of it, to be a more direct and exact source. If I am right in taking *Heroides* XVI to be the Norman poet’s source, then it may also be possible that Pallas’ “pris de chevalerie” is a translation of the “gloriam” which we find in a twelfth-century marginal gloss on *Heroides* XVI. Glory or reputation is here recognized as the necessary corollary for “virtus” or “hardement.” Of the two scribes who provided glosses for the *Heroides* in MS clm 19475, identified by Hexter as T₁ and T₂, T₁ wavers between “gloriam,” suggested by Ovid’s “virtutem,” and the bribe of “sapientia” commonly given in *Aeneid*-glosses: “Pallas [sponderit] gloriam, uel ut quidam dicunt sapientiam” (clm 19475, f. 22r; Hexter, *Ovid and Medieval Schooling*, 282). By contrast, T₂ rejects Ovid’s text and prefers the reading, “sapientiam” (clm 19475, f. 22v; Hexter *Ovid and Medieval Schooling*, 283).
- 31 In his article, “De l’*Enéide* à l’*Enéas*,” Poirion writes of this choice:

- “L’*Eneas* apporte donc une conception originale de Pallas, où se reflète la mentalité de la caste militaire dirigeante par opposition à l’orientation religieuse du commentateur” (215). While it is clear that the poet’s conception was not, in fact, original, Poirion is right to suggest that the *Eneas*-poet, unlike Fulgentius or Bernard Silvester, is aiming for a thoroughly secular use of the Judgment story.
- 32 This is the notation of the second glossator [T₂] in MS clm 19475, fol. 22r; Hexter, *Ovid and Medieval Schooling*, 282. I follow Hexter’s distinction between the first and second scribe of clm 19475 (164–70).
 - 33 This part of the gloss is contributed by the first glossator (T₁) of MS clm 19475, fol. 22v; Hexter, *Ovid and Medieval Schooling*, 283.
 - 34 In at least one later gloss on the *Heroides*, the commentator argues that Ovid’s intention was to condemn both treachery and illegitimate love: “Intentio auctoris est paridem de proditiōe et illicito amore reprehendere” (Florence, MS Biblioteca Laurenziana MS Plut. 36.27, 27 [fourteenth century], f. 30r).
 - 35 Faral (*Recherches*, 114 and n. 3) is surely right in suggesting that the *Eneas*-poet’s interest in epitaphs derives from Ovid, and particularly from the *Heroides*. No doubt, the French writer models Dido’s epitaph on the one given at the end of her Ovidian epistle to Aeneas, though Faral also points us to *Heroides* xiv, 129 (114). But, of course, the *Eneas*-poet alters the Ovidian inscription to suit his themes.
 - 36 Ovidian love was nearly always described in medieval commentaries as *stultus* or *illicitus*, though the definitions of foolishness and illegitimacy might differ from one commentary to another. To be sure, the *Ars amatoria*, taken as a formal composition, was sometimes considered simply a book of rules. But its substance, as medieval commentators were quick to point out, concerned *incontinentia* and *libido*. According to Arnulf of Orleans in his twelfth-century *glosule*, Ovid wrote the *Ars* and the *Remedia amoris* as complementary studies. Taken together, they were intended to teach boys (*pueri*) and girls (*puellae*) how to be strong in understanding love as *luxuria* and *adulteria* and to draw away from illicit love by practicing *castitas* and *continencia* (Ghisalberti, *Arnolfo d’Orleans*, 169). In addition, medieval commentators regularly described Ovid’s *Heroides* as juxtaposed exempla of bad and good, foolish and legitimate or married love. It is the *Heroides*, together with their glosses, that seem to have provided the *Eneas*-poet with his specific inspiration for treating Dido’s foolishness.
 - 37 Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS clm 19475, f. 25v; Hexter, *Ovid and Medieval Schooling*, 256.
 - 38 Long ago, Faral suggested that the *Eneas*-poet drew his idea about the “inequity of love” from Ovid and he pointed particularly to *Amores* 1. While this influential poem may well have contributed to the later poet’s depiction of Dido reflecting on her lost love, *Heroides* vii seems to me a more direct, specific source, and one more helpful in understanding Dido’s moral function in the *Eneas*. See Faral, *Recherches*, 148–49, and *Eneas*, trans. John A. Yunck (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1974), 93n.
 - 39 See Du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis* (Paris: Didot, 1840–50), vol. iv, 540–41.

- 40 References to the *Heroides* are to the edition by H.P. Dörrie, *Ovidii Nasonis Epistulae Heroidum* (Berlin and New York: DeGruyter, 1971).
- 41 The meaning of *amor soltaine* has been usefully studied by Raymond Cormier, who examines Dido's anti-communal love in relation to ideas of community in the *Eneas*. Community in the poem, frequently expressed through the adverb *communalement*, has, as Cormier observes, "a quasi-feudal" connotation of "interdependence, unanimity, or solidarity of will, act, or opinion" (*One Heart One Mind*, 135; and Cormier, "*Comunalement* and *Soltaine* in the *Eneas*," *Romance Notes* 14 [1972], 184–91).
- 42 In Ovid's *Heroides* (xvi.165–68) Paris expresses his choice as comparably exclusive:

Praeposui regnis ego te, quae maxima quondam
pollicita est nobis nupta sororque Iovis,
dumque tuo possem circumdare brachia collo,
contempta est virtus Pallade dante mihi.

(I have set you before the kingdoms once promised to me by the greatest sister and wife of Jove. As long as I could embrace your neck with my arms, the prowess Pallas would give is despicable to me.)

This passage is rich in suggestion for the *Eneas*-poet's treatment of exclusive *versus* communal love. As Paris chooses love for Venus, moreover, he also names the other two gifts (*regnis* and *virtus*), which he, like the twelfth-century Paris, has passed up.

- 43 I have translated *pros* as "brave," but it can also mean "wise," in which case the phrase *pros et sage* could be read as a doublet. See Robert F. Cook, *The Sense of the Song of Roland* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987), 70.
- 44 The bracketed lines do not appear in MSS A or B. (See Salverda de Grave [ed.], vol. II, 150.) But their sense is implied by the preceding lines, whether or not they were part of the poet's original argument.
- 45 This is an opposition which one also finds in the Old French epic tradition. See, for example, the *Chanson de Roland*, 229: "Laisson les fols, as sages nos tenuns." The *Eneas*-poet, and after him Benoît de Sainte-Maure, transferring these categories to questions of love, established a very popular framework in later medieval fiction for studying foolish love in opposition to wise conduct.
- 46 Interestingly enough, in *Heroides* xvi, when Paris is explaining how he has placed (*praeposui*) Venus' offer before the bribes of Juno and Pallas, he uses the word *stulte* to argue that he will never regard his choice of her bribe as "foolish" (*Her.* xvi.165–69).
- 47 *Savoir*, which occupies the poet's attention not only in relation to Dido but also to Paris, Eneas, Turnus, and Lavine, is very often named, in medieval manuscript margins, as the bribe of Pallas in Paris' Judgment. This fact raises an interesting question as to whether, at some point in the compositional process, the poet may likewise have had his Pallas offer *savoir* as her bribe. In any case, though he has made her bribe *hardement*, in his account of the Judgement, *savoir* is also shown to be a necessary virtue for good rulers.
- 48 Virgil likewise notes Dido's disregard of her political responsibilities (*Aeneid*, iv, 86–89). But the *Eneas*-poet highlights her neglect, giving it a central place in his description of Dido and Eneas in love; he also links it by verbal

- repetition to Paris' Judgment and to Lavine's final vindicating "judgment" of Eneas.
- 49 Virgil too makes an antifeminist argument about Dido through Mercury, who urges Aeneas to follow his destiny because "varium et mutabile semper femina [est]" (a woman is always fickle and changeable) (iv, 569–70). The *Eneas*-poet as narrator makes a comparable judgment, but one that has to do with the welfare of the kingdom.
- 50 It is possible that here the poet, concerned not only with Dido's *proëce* and *richece* but also with her *savoir*, is coalescing two traditions concerning Pallas' gifts, as they are also coalesced by one twelfth-century commentator on the *Heroides*. See notes 28, 30, and 47 above.
- 51 MS clm 19475 (f. 1r; Huygens, *Accessus*, 30):
- Intentio sua est legitimum commendare conubium vel amorem, et secundum hoc triplici modo tractat de ipso amore, scilicet de legitimo, de illicito et stulto, de legitimo per Penolopen, de illicito per Canacen, de stulto per Phillidem. Sed has duas partes, scilicet stulti et illiciti, non causa ipsarum, verum gratia illius tercii commendandi interset, et sic commendando legitimum, stultum et illicitum reprehendit . . . Finalis causa talis est, ut visa utilitate quae ex legitimo procedit et infortuniis quae ex stulto et illicito solent prosequi, hunc utrumque fugiamus et soli casto adheramus.
- 52 Blumenfeld-Kosinski ("Old French Narrative Genres") also emphasizes the importance of legitimation and political stability in the poet's argument (see especially 157).
- 53 The letters of Penelope (i), Deianira (ix), Medea (xii), Laodamia (xiii), and Hypermetra (xiv) all present wives who are unhappily separated from their legitimate husbands for one reason or another.
- 54 *Recherches*, 133–50.
- 55 See, for example, the twelfth-century *accessus* quoted on p. 89.
- 56 This defense is made not only by wives but also by lovers in the *Heroides*. Thus Oenone in her letter to Paris (*Heroides* v) insists that Paris should have remained faithful to her as husbands remain faithful to their wives (v. 107–8). She also casts herself as the chaste wife of a deceiving husband (133). But Penelope is, according to the medieval commentators, the example *par excellence* of *legitimus amor*. Even if students had not read any of the letters, they would have learned from the schoolmaster's introduction to the *Heroides* that Ovid intended to teach "per Penolopen . . . de . . . amore . . . legitimo." Without the letters themselves, the *accessus* would have taught youngsters how to think about Ovid's interest in legitimate versus foolish or illegitimate loves.
- 57 Most *accessus* to the *Heroides* throughout the later Middle Ages emphasize the fictive character of the epistles. Ovid, so one twelfth-century glossator puts it, wrote the letters "sub personis illarum grecarum nobilium mulierum" (Huygens, *Accessus*, 31).
- 58 For Ovid's directions on the art of duplicitous letter-writing for women as well as men, see *Ars amatoria* I, 437–58; II, 395–96; 543–44; III, 469–98; 619–30.
- 59 Turnus, by contrast, legalistic, concerned with his promised inheritance,

- seems to regard Lavine not for herself but for her father's land. Indeed, in terms of expressed affection in the poem, he seems to care more for the great woman-warrior, Camille, than for his fiancée.
- 60 *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 13.
- 61 See Lumiansky's seminal study of the love affairs, "Structural Unity." Lumiansky was the first to argue for the importance of the affairs and to insist on Benoît's art in constructing them.
- 62 For a useful, but somewhat inconclusive study of Benoît's interweaving of love and war, see Alfred Adler, "*Militia et amor* in the *Roman de Troie*," *Romanische Forschungen* 72 (1960), 14–29. On the matter of love in *Troie*, see also Jones, *The Theme of Love*, 43–59, and Inez Hansen, *Zwischen Epos und höfischem Roman* (Munich: W. Fink, 1971), 86–164.
- 63 The phrase *fine amor* appears at many points in *Troie*; see lines 393, 1278, 8836, 15020, 19432, 20273, 28744, 29625 and *passim*.
- 64 Benoît generally conjoins the first experience of love with the verb *esprendre* (to flame up). See, for example, lines 15020, 19428.
- 65 It is noteworthy that Paris does not consider his love for Helen *fole*. History, however, reveals the foolishness he fails to perceive. When we witness him at his funeral, we understand that no heir to Troy's throne has been left alive.
- 66 Like the idea of marriage described by Chaucer's Franklin, Jason's description fails to distinguish between the rules of amoral, asocial *fine amor* and those of legitimate marriage.
- 67 In a fourteenth-century gloss on Ovid's *Remedia amoris* (Biblioteca Vaticana, MS Vat. Lat. 1479) we find the following definition of tragedy: "Nota q[uod] tragedia est carmen q[uod] ab amore sortitur principium et fiatur in tristicium sicut inuenitur . . . de medea et de iasone" (Note that tragedy is a song that chances to take its beginning from love and turns into sadness just as is found concerning Medea and Jason.) (f. 29r).
- 68 *The Trojan War: The Chronicles of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian*, trans. R.M. Frazer (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1966), 135.
- 69 On the subject of Benoît's sources, see L. Constans (ed.), *Roman de Troie*, vol. VI, 236, and Jones, *The Theme of Love*, 43–44. Constans was unwilling to credit Benoît with augmenting Dares. Concentrating on differences of detail between Benoît's account of Medea and Ovid's, he posited the prior existence of "un Darès développé" from which the French poet would have drawn his material (VI, 236). While such a possibility is not out of the question, Benoît's consistency of narrative technique in developing all four love affairs in *Troie* argues strongly for his own powers of artistic invention and disposition.
- 70 MS clm 19475, f. 28r; Hexter, *Ovid and Medieval Schooling*, 274. See also University of California, Berkeley, MS UCB 95 (twelfth or thirteenth century) f. 64v; (Mary Edwards Shaner, "The Legend of Good Women and Medieval Commentaries on the *Heroides*," unpublished B. Phil thesis, Oxford University, 1970, 72): "Intentio Ouidii est in hac epistola mulieres ueneficas turpiter se uiris copulantes reprehendere maxime Medeam que pro amore extraneo patrem suum perdidit [*sic*] et patriam deseruit."

Notes to pages 101–10

- 71 Not only does Medea analyze her own motives at considerable length; in the course of the wooing, she speaks more than twice as many lines as her lover. She proposes marriage, she arranges the tryst in her bedroom, and she sends her governess to fetch Jason.
- 72 In *Heroides* xii (57–61) Medea retires to her bedchamber and lies awake all night, torn between love for Jason and fear for his safety. But the two lovers never meet in her chamber.
- 73 The poet uses Helen as a sign of treacherous love at several points in his narrative. She is present at Hector's tomb when Achilles and Polixena meet (17511–14) and she also weeps as Briseida sets off for the Greek camp where she will betray Troilus for Diomedes (11. 13413–15).
- 74 See *Ars amatoria*, I, 351–60.
- 75 In his *Ars*, Ovid recommends *templa* as likely places for young men to meet girls (I, 77). Dares may have provided a slight hint for the link. Just before he tells how Paris first meets Helen, he explains that Castor and Pollux have gone off to Argos for the festival of Juno. In several MSS of *Troie* and in Constans' edition, the text conflates this festival in honor of Juno with the meeting of Paris and Helen in or near Venus' temple. The Greeks have gathered at the temple of Venus, we are told, to celebrate the great feast of Juno (4275–781). A number of MSS, however, give Venus as the deity in whose honor the feast is being celebrated (e.g., Constans' k, B, E, and H), and it may be impossible to decide which reading belongs to Benoît himself.
- 76 Dares devotes only three sentences to Paris' funeral and never specifies its setting.
- 77 It is worth noting that Creon, in Book xii of the *Thebaid*, performs a similar ritual, offering his dead son, Menoeceus, his scepter and crown (*Theb.* xii, 89–90).
- 78 Jones argues that "Benoît has deliberately placed this couple [i.e., Helen and Paris] in a favourable light" (*Theme of Love*, 47). This view, however, stems from ignoring the *several* perspectives Benoît brings to bear on the affair. While Lumiansky suggests that the French poet simply wanted to "increase the love interest" by dramatizing Paris' courtship ("Structural Unity," 415), Adler rightly concludes that the relationship, "quasi-innocent, quasi-legitimate," is presented as "a most objectionable cohabitation" ("*Militia et amor*," 17).
- 79 See note 34 above.
- 80 Of course, there remains the possibility of a lost "source" from which Benoît drew his story of Troilus and Briseida. For a useful discussion of the love affairs in *Troie*, together with a tentative rejection of the lost source theory, see Lumiansky, "Structural Unity," and "The Story of Troilus and Briseida According to Benoît and Guido," *Speculum* 29 (1954), 727–33.
- 81 Diomedes is married to Egial. We do not hear about her until lines 27939ff., when we are told: "Co ert la femme al bon vassal,/ Al fil Tydeüs, al preisié" (That was the wife of the good vassal, the son of Tydeus, the worthy man) When Oeaux, son of King Nauplas, tells Egial that Diomedes is bringing his *amie* with him from the war, intending to make her the *dame* of his house, Egial

- persuades his subjects to forbid him entry into his kingdom. Later, pressed by military need, she forgives him and he is received by his subjects with honor.
- 82 For Helen's concern with reputation, see *Heroides*, xvii, lines 34; 42–50; 115–21; 207–20.
- 83 To be sure, Dares has Troilus wound Diomedes, and this bare suggestion may have been responsible for elevating Diomedes to the status of lover for Briseida.
- 84 For comparable attitudes towards reputation and fear of male trickery, see Helen's letter to Paris in *Heroides*, xvii, especially lines 34, 36, 39, 42–50, and 207–20.
- 85 Again *Heroides* xvii offers a suggestive parallel. Helen, in her response to Paris' letter, likewise praises her future lover's beauty and surmises that women would have difficulty refusing him (lines 93–6).
- 86 These lines follow Dictys (Book vi), but they are also very close to the *Eneas*-poet's opening description of Menelaus, who laid siege to Troy "por le tort fait de sa moillier" (for the wrong done by/to his wife) (24).
- 87 See, for example, the preface to Ovid's *Heroides* (placed after the text) in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Lat. 7994: "In hoc ergo opere agit Ovidius de amore secundum amoris omnes species, que sunt legitimus amor, scilicet coniugium, stultus, scilicet fornicatio, illicitus, scilicet incestus" (f. 27r). This same glossator also describes the *Heroides* as an "exemplar." See also University of California, Berkeley, MS UCB 95 (formerly Phillips 9592): "Materia est amasii romani & romane sub specie grecorum et grecarum introducti. Intentio principalis est ut supra tetigi romanarum mulierum amicitias captare hoc modo scilicet castas commendando et incestas uituperando. Vtilitas ut perlecto libro hoc mulieres et uiri ab illicitis se sciant custodire, et castarum matronarum sequi uestigia et incestarum respuere uicia" (f. 6or; quoted by Shaner, "Legend of Good Women and Commentaries, on the *Heroides*," 33). Virtually all medieval commentaries on the *Heroides* offer a version of this intentionality. As we shall see in the next chapter, commentators in the later Middle Ages tended to describe a *double* intention in the epistles – that of the writer and that of the author.
- 88 Though these narratives are implied in the letters, medieval glossators usually report them explicitly as history in matter-of-fact prose just before the beginnings of the poems.
- 89 This manuscript (British Library, MS Royal 20.D.1) was probably commissioned by King Robert while Boccaccio was still at his court at Naples. There are at least ten extant manuscripts containing the longer version of the prose *Troie*, which, as Clem C. Williams, Jr. has shown, is close to Benoît's *Troie* and differs from the *Roman de Troie en prose* edited by Edmond Faral and Léopold Constans. In this redaction of *Troie*, Ovid's letters seem to have been carefully placed, either in their appropriate historical context or in order to deepen our response to a false or foolish lover, or both. See Williams' important article, "A Case of Mistaken Identity: Still Another Trojan Narrative in Old French Prose," *MÆ* 53 (1984), 59–72. On the longer version, see also Paul Meyer, "Les Premières Compilations françaises d'histoire ancienne," *Romania* 14

- (1885), 36–81; Léopold Constans, “Une Traduction française des *Heroides* d’Ovide au XIIIe siècle,” *Romania* 43 (1914), 177–98; Brian Woledge, *Bibliographie des romans et nouvelles en prose française antérieurs à 1500* (Geneva, 1954) and *Supplément* (1954–73); Kathleen Chesney, “A Neglected Prose Version of the *Roman de Troie*,” *MÆ* 11 (1942), 46–60; Françoise Viellard (ed.), *Le Roman de Troie en prose* (Version du Cod. Bodmer 147), (Bibliotheca Bodmeriana: Textes, 4) (Paris and Geneva: Droz, 1969). On MS Royal 20.D.1, see François Avril, “Trois manuscrits napolitains des collections de Charles V et de Jean de Berry,” *Bibliothèque de l’Ecole des Chartes* 127 (1969), 300–14, and Williams, “A Case.”
- 90 Boccaccio begins both his experiments in the tradition of the *roman antique* – the *Filostrato* and the *Teseida* – with lyrical prose love epistles, ostensibly written by distraught lovers who use their letters to frame their “antiche storie.” Not very much later in his career, the Italian poet actually composes his own Heroid, the *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta* (c. 1343–44?), a prose discourse, spoken by Fiammetta, who, quoting at considerable length from the *Heroides*, laments a past love. On Boccaccio’s use of the *Heroides* as his model for the *Elegia*, see Cesare Segre, *Structures and Time*, trans. John Meddemmen (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 66–92. In the *Elegia*, as in many of the *Heroides*, a woman, speaking in the first person, calls to mind a past love which has become the source of painful melancholy.
- 91 Robert Hollander, *Boccaccio’s Two Venuses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 112. As Hollander has briefly put it,
- the tradition of the *Remedia* operates in Boccaccio simultaneously with that of the *Ars* as a continual correction to the bad doctrines of love . . . Boccaccio, from the very first of his poems, regards himself as “the new Ovid” in a positive sense only. When he presents love in the tradition of the *Ars*, he does so in order to condemn it.
- (*Two Venuses*, 114)
- Hollander’s conclusions are tentative but he invites further study of Boccaccio’s “sense of Ovid,” rightly suggesting that his vernacular fictions need to be “examined against a medieval matrix of value” (116).

4 FROM HISTORY INTO FICTION: BOCCACCIO’S *FILOSTRATO* AND THE QUESTION OF FOOLISH LOVE

- 1 The date for the *Filostrato* remains conjectural. Vittore Branca argues persuasively that the poem was written about 1335 (*Tutte le Opere*, II, ed. Branca, 5). What is certain is that it was written in Naples when Boccaccio was frequenting King Robert’s court.
- 2 See Constans (ed.), *Roman de Troie*, VI, 335–37. For a full discussion of the Troy legend in Italy, see Egidio Gorra, *Testi inediti di Storia Trojana preceduti da uno studio sulla leggenda trojana in Italia* (Turin: Ermano Loescher, 1887), esp. 58–100.
- 3 Constans attributes the following MSS of *Troie* to Italian scribes (VI, 47; 54–56): Paris, BN, n.a. fr. 6774; Venice, Bibl. Marciana, gall. XVII and gall. XVIII.

- 4 Egidio Gorra is responsible for confirming Binduccio's dependence on Benoit (*Testi inediti*, 167-68).
- 5 See pp. 313-14, note 89.
- 6 Barry Windeatt, "Chaucer and the *Filostrato*," in P. Boitani (ed.), *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 164. David Wallace, *Chaucer and the Early Writings of Boccaccio* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, and Dover, N.H.: D.S. Brewer, 1985), 74.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 49.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 72, 104, 105. See also Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 125.
- 9 Although Windeatt and Wallace's view of the poem as a lyrical love fantasy represents a majority opinion, a few scholars - among them, Carlo Dionisotti, Alberto Roncaglia, Michelangelo Picone, Vittore Branca, Robert Hollander, Victoria Kirkham, and Janet Levarie Smarr - have emphasized instead the technical artifice and moral seriousness of Boccaccio's early poetry. The first three of these scholars have effectively demonstrated that Boccaccio's *ottava rima* derives not from the popular *cantare* tradition, but from the courtly French *chant* and the Italian *canzone* (C. Dionisotti, "Appunti su antichi testi," *IMU* 7 [1964], 77-131; A. Roncaglia, "Per la storia dell'ottava rima," *Cultura neolatina* 25 [1965], 5-14; M. Picone, "Boccaccio e la codificazione dell'ottava," in *Boccaccio: Secoli di vita* [Atti del Congresso Internazionale: Boccaccio 1975] [Ravenna: Longo, 1977], 53-65). Vittore Branca has pointed the way towards understanding the prose epistles prefacing the early romances ("Schemi autobiografici e schemi letterari nelle lettere di Boccaccio," *Bibliofilia* 49 [1947], 1-40, and "Giovanni Boccaccio, rinnovatore dei generi letterari," in Carlo Ballerini [ed.], *Atti del Convegno di Nimega sul Boccaccio* [Bologna: Patron Editore, 1975], 13-35). The last three critics have concerned themselves with the poet's learned moral interests in his early writing. See Robert Hollander, *Boccaccio's Two Venuses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), and "The Validity of Boccaccio's Self-Exegesis in His *Teseida*," *Me&H* (n.s.) 8 (1977), 163-83; Victoria Kirkham, "Reckoning with Boccaccio's *Questioni d'amore*," *MLN* 89 (1974), 47-59, and "Chiuso parlare in Boccaccio's *Teseida*," in A.S. Bernardo and A. Pellegrini, *Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio: Studies in the Italian Trecento in Honor of Charles S. Singleton* (Binghamton, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1983), 305-51; J.L. Smarr, "Boccaccio and the Stars: Astrology in the 'Teseida,'" *Traditio* 35 (1979), 303-32, and *Boccaccio and Fiammetta: the Narrator as Lover* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986).
- 10 It seems clear to me that Boccaccio composed his *Filostrato* in and for King Robert's court at Naples. For the character of Robert's court and its influence on the young Boccaccio, see Francesco Torraca, "Giovanni Boccaccio à Napoli," *Rassegna critica della letteratura italiana* 20 (1915), 145-245, and 21 (1916), 1-80, and *Giovanni Boccaccio à Napoli* (Naples: Pierro, 1915); G.M. Monti, "L'età angioina," in *Storia dell'Università di Napoli* (Naples: Riccardo Ricciardi Editore, 1924); Romolo Caggese, *Roberto d'Angiò e i suoi tempi*, 2 vols. (Florence: Bemporad, 1930); G. De Blasiis, "La dimora di Giovanni Boccaccio à Napoli," *Arch. Stor. Napoli* 17, 94-95, and "Cino da Pistoia

- dell'Università di Napoli," *Arch. Stor. Napoli* 2, 107ff., and 11, 139; E.G. Léonard, *Boccace et Naples* (Paris: Librairie E. Droz, 1944), and *Les Angevins de Naples* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954); F. Bologna, *I pittori alla corte angioina di Napoli* (Rome: U. Bozzi, 1969); Francesco Sabatini, *Napoli angioina* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1975); R. Weiss, "Notes on Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro," *Italian Studies* 10 (1955), 40-42. Recently David Wallace has argued that Boccaccio "would not have found favor with Robert" because of the "popular composition" of his early poems. As I hope to demonstrate in this chapter and the next, however, whatever elements of popular culture the *Filostrato* and the *Teseida* display, their academic, self-consciously composed character is apparent at every turn. It seems unlikely that the young student who took as his mentors the scholars Robert brought to Naples would not have aimed to please the king whom Petrarch chose as his examiner for the position of poet laureate. See Wallace's essay, "Chaucer and Boccaccio's Early Writings" in Piero Boitani (ed.), *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 146-47.
- 11 Of course, as medievalists well know, writers of the later Middle Ages had very highly developed formal concerns and they were deeply interested in the theory and practice of fictional composition. None of the characteristics Nabokov attributes to fiction is lacking in medieval fictions like Gottfried of Strassburg's *Tristan* or the lyrics of the *trouvères*, though each of the concepts – and particularly "originality" and "invention" – would have had a different definition among medieval writers.
 - 12 *Strong Opinions* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1973), 160-61.
 - 13 Thus, for example, Bernard Silvester describes Virgil's *Aeneid* as proceeding not "usque secundum historie veritatem" but by means of fictions ("fictio-mentis") (*The Commentary on the First Six Books of the Aeneid of Vergil Commonly Attributed to Bernardus Silvestris*, ed. J.W. Jones and E.F. Jones [Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1977], 1). But Bernard Silvester also insists that Virgil has hidden philosophical truth beneath a fictive veil. Guido delle Colonne, who takes a much less favorable view of fiction, accuses not only Virgil but also Homer and Ovid of using "fictionibus," and "fingens multa que non fuerunt et que fuerunt aliter transformando" (*Historia destructionis Troiae*, ed. N.E. Griffin [Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1936; Kraus rept., 1970], 4).
 - 14 Robert Hollander was the first modern scholar to recognize that the *Filostrato* is a highly critical, moral study of erotic love. "The praise of love which we find in the *Filostrato*," he writes, "should probably be understood as being the praise offered by fools and knaves, by those who are blind to their own true interests or only too calculatingly aware of these. Such a judgment is at variance with the general perception of Boccaccio's intention in the work" (*Boccaccio's Two Venuses*, 50 and n. 99). Janet Smarr briefly and usefully connects the *Filostrato* with the tradition of the medieval *artes amandi* in her recent book: "Troilo," she observes, "is a standard lover, whose falling in love follows step by step the description set forth by Andreas Capellanus" (*Boccaccio and Fiammetta*, 15). Paul Clogon has edited one fifteenth-century

verse-commentary on the *Filostrato* that supports the reading I present in this chapter (“Two Verse Commentaries on the Ending of Boccaccio’s *Filostrato*,” *MLH* 7 [1976], 151). “Quanto exercitio vol, quanta fatiga,” the author of the commentary writes:

questo cocente fuoco decto amore!
E comme stregie el core
a tali amanti ponti de suoi armi
ben se po dir: la sua mente, mendica
d’ogni alerezza, e piena de dolore
vivendo in tale erore. (Madrid, MS 10,080)

It is this traditional, clerkly argument, I argue, that Boccaccio implicates in the design of his poem.

- 15 On the distance Boccaccio maintains between himself and his narrator in the *Filostrato*, see Hollander, *Boccaccio’s Two Venuses*, 51–52, 92–124. See also D.W. Robertson, Jr. *A Preface to Chaucer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 475; Smarr, *Boccaccio and Fiammetta*, 14–33. Smarr suggests that Boccaccio may have modeled his play with narrative perspective on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, St. Augustine’s *Confessions*, and Dante’s *Commedia* (33). To these sources must be added the example of the *Heroides*, the *Roman de Troie*, and medieval *artes amandi* like Andreas Capellanus’ *De amore* and Guillaume de Lorris’s *Roman de la rose*.
- 16 So, for example, in separating Paris’ expressed intention in *Heroides* xvi from Ovid’s unexpressed, implicit intention, one fourteenth-century Italian glossator writes:

Cuius intentio duplex est, scilicet scribentis est Helenam ad suum amorem detrahere et eam exhortari ut ipsum diligat. Intentio auctoris est Paridem de prodicione et illicito amore reprehendere. (Biblioteca Laurenziana, MS Plut. 36.27, f. 40r.)

- 17 Troilo himself as the principal protagonist of the *Filostrato* is the first to call erotic love a “gran follia” (1.23). But we watch him for most of the poem dramatizing the same wrong choice his brother Paris had made in his theft of Helen. Compare, for example, *Filostrato* III.88, 1–6, with *Heroides*, xvi, 165–68. For other instances of this explicit foregrounding, see *Filostrato* II, 33; III, 47; IV, 123 and 139–45; V, 17 (in narrative summary). In a parallel way, Criseida likewise explicitly chooses loving Troilo over “onestà,” “onore,” “castità,” and legitimate marriage. Yet, like Helen in the *Heroides*, Dido in the *Roman d’Eneas*, and Briseida in the *Roman de Troie*, she is fully aware of the ethical and social concerns she ought to have. See, for instance, *Filostrato*, II.45, 66, 123, 134, and IV.69.
- 18 Boccaccio’s flexible narrative stanza serves as a metaphoric space – a *capax mansio* or *receptaculum* to use Dante’s definition of the term “stanza” – within which to unfold his study of youthful folly. Dante’s definition of the stanza takes advantage of the word’s literal meaning as a “room” (*DVE*, II, ix, 4, 3d edn., ed. P.G. Ricci [Florence: Le Monnier, 1968], 1–2). Boccaccio tends to use his stanza form – the *ottava rima* – precisely as an architectural space or receptacle in Dante’s sense. His stanzas contain, even as they neatly divide, the

parts of love letters, passionate *canzoni*, interior dialogical argument, public oratory, and private love-suits.

- 19 As Robert Marichal has remarked about the octosyllabic couplet of the *romans antiques*, “A vrai dire sa simplicité . . . , sa brièveté, le rendent apte à tous les usages; ce sera le vers du théâtre, sérieux ou comique. Il a le grand mérite de ne pas pousser à l'éloquence et de décourager toute déclamation” (“Naissance du roman,” in M. Gandillac and E. Jeaneau [eds.], *Entretiens sur la Renaissance du XIIe siècle* [Paris and The Hague: Mouton, 1968], 457). The couplet, close as it is to prose discourse, encourages an easy movement from the world to the book, from historical reportage to intimate conversation, to commentary. Lacking the strictures of stanzaic form, Benoît's poem could be reduced easily enough to prose, as it was several times during the course of the thirteenth century. The octosyllabic couplet, moreover, blurs the boundaries between poem and poem, and it also encourages additions and continuations. By contrast, Boccaccio's *Filostrato* is divided into formal spatial as well as temporal parts. Instead of the driving, supple octosyllabic couplets of the French romance tradition, the Italian poet uses a form of *ottava rima* in which six lines of alternating rime are concluded by a riming couplet. Until twenty years ago, scholars tended to locate the origin of Boccaccio's *ottava rima* in the popular tradition of the *cantare*. And in his recent book, David Wallace repeats this view in order to argue for the “popular” character of Boccaccio's *Filostrato* (Wallace, *Chaucer and Boccaccio*, 76). Yet several important articles, written over the last two decades, have effectively dismantled the “romantic” view of folk origins for Boccaccio's verse form. The most persuasive and revolutionary of these essays are by C. Dionisotti (“Appunti su antichi testi,” 77–131) and Alberto Roncaglia (“Per la storia dell'ottava rima,” 5–14). Boccaccio's eight-line stanza in the *Filostrato* stands at the beginning of a tradition of narrative poetry that includes not only his own *Teseida* and *Ninfale Fiesolano*, but also the Renaissance poems of Pulci, Boiardo, Ariosto and Tasso. Moreover, his *ottava* lies squarely behind the rhyme royal of Chaucer's *Troilus* and also, indirectly, behind the Spenserian stanza of the *Faerie Queene*.
- 20 For a description of the manuscripts of the *Filostrato*, see Vincenzo Pernicone (ed.), *Il Filostrato e Il Ninfale Fiesolano* (Bari: Laterza, 1937), 353–73, and “I Manoscritti del ‘Filostrato’ di G. Boccaccio,” *SFI* 5 (1938), 41–82. For a fuller list of manuscripts, including those outside Italy, see Vittore Branca, “Elenco dei codici del *Filostrato*,” in his *Tradizione delle opere di G. Boccaccio* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1958), 44–46.
- 21 See, for example, Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS Magliabechiano 11, 11, 90, which also contains illustrations; Magliabechiano 11, 11, 38; Florence, Biblioteca Ricardiana MS Riccardiano 1111; and London, British Library, MS Add. 21246.
- 22 It appears from the evidence of the manuscripts that Boccaccio wrote two different sets of rubrics for his poem – one brief, the other full. See Pernicone, “I Manoscritti del ‘Filostrato,’” 80–81. Pernicone gives the fuller version of the rubrics in his edition (*Il Filostrato e Il Ninfale Fiesolano* [Bari: Laterza, 1937]), as does Mario Marti (*Opere Minori in Volgare*, vol. 11 [Milan: Rizzoli,

- 1970]). For the shorter version of the rubrics, see, for example, Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS Riccardiano 1064.
- 23 Critics have often read the letter simply in this way. For a bibliography of scholars who have considered the *Filostrato's* prologue autobiographical, see Smarr, *Boccaccio and Fiammetta*, 231-34. See too Smarr's valuable analysis of the complex relationships between the narrator and Filomena and between the reader and the poem.
- 24 In their prologues, the prose translators of *Troie* are, if anything, *more* clerkly and philosophical than Benoît. See, for example, the sententious prologue to the prose *Troie* edited by Faral and Constans and Guido delle Colonne's elaborately academic *accessus* to his *Historia destructionis Troiae*, (3-5). Boccaccio's prologal letter operates in systematic contrast to Benoît and his imitators. By the same token, Chaucer's prologue to *Troilus and Criseyde* directly and playfully responds *both* to Benoît's preface and to Boccaccio's.
- 25 More than forty years ago, Vittore Branca issued a strong warning against romantic readings of Boccaccio's apparently autobiographical "revelations," one that has a significant bearing on the *Filostrato's* prologue. According to Branca, not only Boccaccio's *rime* and narrative poetry, but also his "personal" letters, must be read not as "gelose confessioni epistolari di avvenimenti reali, ma pure esercitazioni retoriche intessute su schemi convenzionali e preordinati" ("Schemi," 195).
- 26 Among the most useful studies of medieval dictaminal theory are the following: James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: a History of Rhetorical Theory from St. Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 194-268; Helene Wieruszowski, "Ars Dictaminis in the Time of Dante," *McH* 1 (1943), 95-108, and "Rhetoric and the Classics in Italian Education," *Studia Gratiana*, 9 (1967), 171-207; Charles B. Faulhaber, "The *Summa dictaminis* of Guido Faba," in James J. Murphy (ed.) *Medieval Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Medieval Rhetoric* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 85-111. See also Boncompagno da Signa's collection of model love-letters, the *Rota Veneris*, ed. and trans. Josef Purkart (Delmar, N.Y.: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1975). On the possible influence of Boncompagno's *Rota* on the young Boccaccio, see Vittore Branca, *Boccaccio medievale* (Florence: Sansoni, 1970), 21-22, 47, 49-50, 213-15, 233. But see also Robert L. Benson, "Protohumanism and Narrative Technique in Early 13th-Century Italian 'Ars Dictaminis,'" in Marga Cottino-Jones and Edward F. Tuttle (eds.) *Boccaccio: Secoli di Vita* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1975), 31-50. The practice of writing model or fictional love-letters no doubt arose both in imitation of the *Heroides* and as a reaction to the dry exercises of the dictaminal curriculum.
- 27 It is not without significance that vernacular translations of the *Heroides*, whether in French or Italian, were most often in prose. As Cesare Segre observes, "prose alone could adapt itself to the manifold complexities of classical rhetoric, to its hairsplitting oratory of interrogation and exclamation, its unfolding of adjective and noun more in terms of emphasis than rules, its elaborate periphrases" (*Structures and Time*, trans. John Meddemman

- [Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979], 69–70). On vernacular translations of the *Heroides*, see E. Bellorini, *Note sulle traduzioni italiane delle "Eroidi" d'Ovidio anteriori al Rinascimento* (Turin, 1900); L. Constans, "Une Traduction française des Héroïdes d'Ovide au XIII^e siècle," *Romania* 43 (1914), 177–98; P.G.C. Campbell, *L'Épître d'Otbea: étude sur les sources de Christine de Pisan* (Paris: Champion, 1924).
- 28 The number of parts recommended for letters in the best-known treatises varies from three to five. In the larger division, a letter would include a salutation, an *exordium* designed as a *captatio benevolentiae*, a *narratio*, a *petitio*, and a *conclusio*. But several handbooks reduce the parts to three related components: the *exordium*, the *narratio*, and the concluding *petitio*. See, for example, Conrad of Mure, *Summa de arte prosandi*, in Ludwig Rockinger (ed.) *Briefsteller und Formelbücher des elften bis vierzehnten Jahrhunderts* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1961), vol. 1, 421. Boncompagno advocated at different times two different schemas: "In the *Palma* he names the three parts as *salutatio*, *narratio*, *petitio*. In the *Rhetorica novissima* he declares that the three integral parts are *exordium*, *narratio*, and *petitio*" (Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 255).
 - 29 See, for instance, Magister Ludolph's instructions in his *Summa dictaminum* (Rockinger [ed.], *Briefsteller*, 1, 367. As Master Ludolph says, the *exordium* is to serve as a "captacio beniuolencie" and, wherever it appears, "ad laudem recipientis pertinet."
 - 30 *Gemma purpurea, De doctrina inveniendi*: "[s]i sermo sit difficilis, premittat dictator competens exordium prouerbium uel arengam" (Rockinger (ed.), *Briefsteller*, 1, 185). In this regard, the letter was generally regarded as a form designed to *hide* its message. As Conrad of Mure puts it in his *Summa de arte prosandi*: "Epistola tribus de causis precipue fuit inuenta, scilicet ut secreta per ipsam celentur vel oculentur, et ut inpericia seu rusticitas portitoris seu exhibitoris literarum non noceat mittentis intentioni, et ut localis corporum sequestratio seu distantia non inpediat comodum seu colloquium amicorum" (Rockinger [ed.], *Briefsteller*, 1, 420–21).
 - 31 See Faulhaber, "*Summa dictaminis* of Guido Faba," 85–111.
 - 32 As Andreas Capellanus points out in his *De arte amandi*, love proceeds from the physical "visio" of and "immoderata cogitatio" on the beauty of the love-object. Because eyesight is required for this experience, those who are blind cannot engage in this kind of passionate love. Boccaccio's play with the *questione d'amore* seems to include Andreas's definition of love as well as the French chaplain's warnings about dishonest and foolish love in Book III of his treatise.
 - 33 The *quaestio* assumed an independent generic status in the twelfth century, and its shape coincided with rules of disputation learned through the formal study of dialectic and rhetoric. In its simplest form, the *quaestio* consists of two parts. First, the problem is posed, introduced by *quaeritur* (it is asked). Then the response or solution is given. But questions usually involve an expansion of one or both parts. Authors are cited and arguments presented to clarify, define, or exemplify the problem or to support the judgment. Since, as Gilbert

- de la Porée observes, questions, based as they are on doubt, always arise from an affirmation and its contradictory negation, the arguments on both sides must be considered. (Commentaria in Librum Boethii, “De Trinitate”, PL 64, 1253; Raymond Martin (ed.), *Questiones de divina pagina*, vol. 1 of *Oeuvres de Robert de Melun*, (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Louvaniense Bureaux, 1932), xxxvi–xxxvii).
- 34 Thus Martin describes the difference between the *lectio* and *quaestio* as classroom exercises in the medieval schools. While the student would have been rather passive in listening to the teacher’s reading, “par la *Questio*, son esprit est mis davantage en éveil et appelé à réagir, à comparer, à juger, à discuter, à creuser plus à fond un problème” (Martin [ed.], *Oeuvres de Robert of Melun*, vol. 1, xxxvii).
- 35 The relationship between the *Filocolo* and the *Filostrato* presents vexing problems for scholars. Both works belong to the period between 1335 and 1340, when Boccaccio was in Naples. Yet whatever the priority between them may be with regard to date of composition, the two certainly share formal interests, and particularly an interest in questions of love.
- 36 The earliest extant literary *questioni d’amore* appear in Andreas Capellanus’ late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century *De amore*. Their form parallels that of the more serious academic *quaestio*, which had become a principal mode of instruction in the twelfth-century classroom. Scholastic questions and formal love questions not only share the same structure; they also seem to stem from the same rhetorical and philosophical traditions. Indeed, the questions of love in Andreas’ treatise should probably be regarded as a playful parody of schoolroom habits of ethical literary disputation, though they may also owe a debt to contemporary Provençal love debates. See Pio Rajna, “L’episodio delle questioni d’amore nel *Filocolo* del Boccaccio,” *Romania* 31 (1902), 35. On the fate of Andreas’s *De amore* in Italy, see Rajna, “Tre studi per la storia del libro di Andrea Capellano,” *Studi di Filologia Romanza* 5 (1891), 193–272.
- 37 Vittore Branca (ed.), *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vol. 1 (Verona: Mondadori, 1967), IV 59, p. 441: “qual sia maggiore diletto all’amante, o vedere presenzialmente la sua donna, o, non vedendola, di lei amorosamente pensare” (what is the greater delight for the lover, to see his lady present [before him], or, not seeing her, to think amorously about her).
- 38 The *Filostrato*’s narrator deliberately opens the way for alternative readings twice in his epistle. First, he points out that he has not himself enjoyed the pleasures of love experienced by Troilo with Criseida because Fortune “fu mai tanto favorevole” (22). In the second place, there are “altre cose” which do not pertain to the narrator’s own history, but which he has been forced by the “storia” to include (23).
- 39 The formal songs, marked as such, occur at II.57.5–60; III.74–89; IV.30–40; V.19–21 and 62–66 (modeled on a lyric by Boccaccio’s teacher, Cino da Pistoia); and IX.1–8. A number of other stanzas of lament participate by analogy in the *canzone* tradition, though they do not fully conform to the rather rigorous rules for the making of the conventional courtly love song.
- 40 In composing a *canzone* for his friend, Pandaro follows the rules for writing

persuasive letters given in the *artes dictaminis*. As theorists were quick to point out, *dictatores* seldom, if ever, wrote their letters *in propria persona*. In most cases, they were inventing epistles for patrons and therefore had to impersonate their clients, imagining too the character of the letter's recipient. Moreover, these highly artificial letters nearly always initiate a dialogue or even a debate and demand a response. In his *Doctrina ad inveniendas, incipiendas et formandas materias*, Guido Faba (born c. 1190), one of the most popular of the Italian dictaminal theorists, explains how the dictator is to create through fantasy his client's virtues and those of the recipient. "He may bring forward the two characters," he says, "by drawing them up in his heart, as if they were seeing each other face to face for the sake of speaking to each other." This advice corresponds to directions in the classical rhetorics for orators organizing their legal arguments. It also recalls the typical medieval comment on Ovid's *Heroides* concerning authorial impersonation.

- 41 The complaint, as a subtype of the *canzone* (French *chant*), has its roots in the formal lyric poetry of the troubadours. As a *canzone*, moreover, the complaint is closely related, from a rhetorical point of view, to Boccaccio's opening letter and to Ovid's *Heroides*. Both forms involve elaborate artifices and the manipulation of a central, speaking "I" persona for the sake of a persuasive purpose.
- 42 Here Boccaccio adapts a setting familiar enough from Benoît's *Troie* (as well as the *Roman d'Eneas*), though it is one that occupies a much less prominent position in the French poem. In the *Roman de Troie*, a panoramic field of action dominates, punctuated at widely spaced intervals by domestic scenes and interior debate or private conversation. By contrast, much of the action in the *Filostrato* takes place *in camera* and most of it is in the form of private rather than public dialogue and debate.
- 43 Such a characterization of the lover as lost, overcome, in love with death, emptied of self is by no means novel with Boccaccio. Benoît's Achilles, in love with Polixena, paints a comparable portrait of himself in the *Roman de Troie*. "Jo sui desvez," he declares, "E de mon sen si forsenez/ Que jo ne sai que jo me faz" (I am destroyed, and deprived of my wits, and I do not know what I should do) (17685–87). When the author of the *Roman de Troie en prose* comments on Achilles' condition, he is even more explicit about his condition:

[I]l est en pooir d'autre et non pas en son droit sens ne en sa rasnable matiere: por coi il juge maintes fois le faus por voir et le voir por faus . . . Et en tel rage et en tel folie entra Achilles por le regart de Polixenaim, si come vos avés oi, et se mist si dou tout en pooir d'Amors, que il en laissa et oblia tout son sens et sa raisnable matiere.

(ed. L. Constans and E. Faral [Paris: Champion, 1922], vol. 1, 161)

(He is in the power of another and not in his right mind nor in his reasonable nature: therefore many times he judges the false to be true, the true false . . . And Achilles enters into such a rage and in such foolishness for the sight of Polixena, as you have heard, and forgets all his wits and his reasonable nature.)

- 44 Not only does the narrator describe the "biographical" circumstances and extravagant behavior of the singer. He has also told us, in his prologue, that Troiolo's voice is, in fact, a mask for his own: 'quante volte Troiolo piangere e

- dolersi della partita di Criseida troverete, tante apertamente potrete conoscere le mie medesime voci" (as many times as you find Troilo weeping and mourning for the departure of Criseida, so many [times] you will be able to recognize my own words) (22). If Troilo is actually speaking *for* the narrator, are the words his, or are they the narrator's?
- 45 The phrase "coniugationes stantiarum" is Dante's. He uses it to describe the structure of the *canzone*, but it is a phrase that also serves well to describe the various formal constructs, including letters and speeches as well as *canzoni* in the *Filostrato*. See the *De vulgari eloquentia*, II, ix, 1-3, 240.
 - 46 It is interesting to observe that in the course of Part IV Boccaccio deftly juxtaposes the strategic rhetorical "I" of Calcas' political oratory with Troilo's unstable, insubstantial lyric "I" as a lover. Lamenting his loss, he defines himself by desire.
 - 47 *Andreas Capellanus On Love*, ed. and trans. P.G. Walsh (London: Duckworth, 1982), II.ii, 228-29.
 - 48 *Ibid.*, II.iii, 230-31.
 - 49 This emphasis marks a decisive change from earlier accounts of the hero's loss of Criseida. In the *Roman de Troie* and all its successors, a condemnation of Briseida as an example of the changeable woman occupies the moral center of the departure scene. All emphasize how Briseida "quickly" ("tost"/"tosto") changes her love. Benoît and his prose redactors seize the occasion to rail at length against women as emblems of *Fortuna*, always smiling with one eye, crying with the other, delighting in pleasure, shunning pain, easily abandoning an old for a new love. Guido is perhaps most forceful in his conclusion: "There is truly no hope so false as that which resides in women and proceeds from them. Hence a young man can deservedly be judged foolish . . . if he puts his trust in the flattery of women and entrusts himself to their false declarations" (Guido de Columnis, *Historia destructionis Troiae*, Bk. 18, 164).
 - 50 Boccaccio's narrative idea for detailing Troilo's lamentations in Part V no doubt began with brief suggestions in Benoît or his prose translators. Benoît's *Troie* as well as the *Roman de Troie en prose* and Binduccio's *Libro* give very brief summaries of the two lovers' sad state. While the Greeks receive Briseida with joy, "ele ploroit si durement que nus ne la pooit reconforter./ Et d'autre part Troilus s'en torne desconfortez" (she was weeping so hard that no one could comfort her on account of it, and, on the other side, Troilus returns despondent). In the *Libro della storia di Troia*, after Briseida has left, "Troilus se ne va da l'altra parte, matto e pensoso di grande maniera" (On the other side, Troilus leaves, deranged and pensive) (Gorra [ed.], *Testi inediti*, 408). In contrast to these very brief descriptions, however, Boccaccio devotes most of the stanzas of Part V to a rhetorical dramatization of Troilo's grief, together with Pandaro's efforts at consolation. As soon as Criseida has left, Troilo returns to Troy "tristo ed angoscioso,/ quanto fu mai nessun" (sad and anguished as none had been before) (v.15.1-2). In a state "troppo più pensoso/ che stato fosse ancora," he arrives at his "palagio." While the sources pass from a brief description of Troilus' state to Diomedes' courtship of Briseida, Boccaccio reserves that material for his Part VI. In Part V, instead,

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he extends Troiolo's *pensoso* state into private laments, debate with Pandaro, a visit to Sarpedon's house, a futile search for his beloved at her closed house and throughout Troy. Moreover, he introduces the temporal interest in Troiolo's ten-day wait, pending Criseida's promised return, and he thereby prepares the way for his part VII.

- 51 As Benoît puts it in his *Troie*:

S'ele a hui duel, el ravra joie
 . . .
 Tost i avra torné s'amor,
 Tost en sera reconfortee.
 Femme n'iert ja trop esgaree:
 Por ço qu'ele truist ou choisir,
 Poi durent puis li suen sospir. (13434-40)

(If she has sorrow today, she will have joy again . . . Quickly she will have changed her love, quickly she will be comforted in it. A woman will never be very anxious. As long as she finds [someone] to look upon, her sighs last a short time.)

- 52 This passage coincides too with Binduccio's description of Criseida after the lovers have parted: "in lei non avea allora nulla gioia e nulla letizia" (Gorra [ed.], *Testi inediti*, 408). It also parallels his summary of Benoît: "Elle [i.e., women] non vogliono niente lor duolo longamente nutrire" (*ibid.*, 407).
- 53 *Roman de Troie*:

La danzele cuide morir,
 Quant de celui deit departir
 Qu'ele tant aime e tant a chier.
 Ne li fine hore de preier
 Qu'il ne l'oblit, quar a sa vie
 Ne sera ja autrui amie;
 S'amor toz jorz li guardera,
 Ja mais jor autre ne l'avra,
 Ne rien n'avra joie de li:
 "Bele," fait il, "or vos en pri,
 S'onc m'amastes, ore i pareisse!
 Ne vueil que nostre amor descreisse:
 De meie part vos di jo bien
 Qu'el n'apeticera de rien.
 Mon cuer avreiz toz jorz verai,
 Ja por autre nos changerai."
 De ço se sont entreplevi,
 Ainz qu'il se sieent departi. (13495-512)

(The young woman thinks of dying when she has to part from him whom she so loves and holds so dear. Nor does she ever cease begging him not to forget her, for in her life she will never be a lover to anyone else. She will protect her love always, she will never have another, nor will she have any joy from another. "Lovely one," he says, "now I beg you concerning this, if ever you have loved me, show it now! I don't want our love to diminish. For my part I tell you surely that it will not diminish at all. You will have my honest heart always; I will never change ours for another." They gave each other assurance of this before they parted.)

- 54 Even if the *Filostrato* preceded the *Filocolo* in time of composition, it must be remembered that Boccaccio raises the same question concerning widows

- versus maidens in a sonnet known to predate the *Filostrato*, addressed to another poet, Pucci. In Pucci's response, widows are again preferred.
- 55 Ovid gives a parallel warning about care in choosing a propitious time for courtship in his *Ars amatoria*, ed. E.J. Kenney (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 1.357–62, p. 126.
- 56 Such a reading of hidden intention against the grain of the letter would have been encouraged by Ovid and his medieval imitators. In his *Rota veneris*, for example, Boncompagno da Signa provides a sample epistle that exactly parallels Diomedes' reading of Criseida's response. In it, a lady replies negatively to the lover's suit. "I neither need your service," the lady writes, "nor do I wish that you henceforth presume to send me such messages." The unwary reader might suppose that such a reply represented an uncompromising refusal of the lover's petition. Boncompagno, however, interprets it in quite another way. "From this type of letter," he observes, "the lover will be able to discern that his desire shall doubtless be fulfilled" (*Rota*, 79). Here Boncompagno follows Ovid by suggesting that a lady will "refuse [the petition for her favor] even if she actually wants to accept the lover" (*Rota Veneris*, 78). See Ovid, *Ars amatoria*, ed. Kenney, 1, 483ff.; *Heroides*, xvii (Helen's letter of reply to Paris); Andreas Capellanus, *De amore*, 1, 6.
- 57 One of the most common later medieval *accessus* to Ovid's *Remedia* describes the poem in this way: "Cum liber Artis Amatorie multos traxerat in errorem prolata re vera Arte Amatoria omnes amoris vacare studuerunt, sed sollempni preceptorum limite derelicto, quidam ad laqueum, quidam ad incendium, ceteri ad cetera mortis genera cogebantur. Hac de causa Ovidius ad eorum remedium hoc opus adhibuit in quo opere agit de amore levi et remedioso" (Paris, BN MS Lat. 7994, ed. Fausto Ghisalberti, "Mediaeval Biographies of Ovid," *JWCI* 9 [1946], 47).
- 58 The text in Andreas is as follows (my emphasis): "Amans quidem a coamante haec licenter potest accipere, scilicet orarium, capillorum ligamina, auri argentique coronam, *pectoris fibulam*, speculum, cingulum, marsupium, lateris cordulam, pectinem, manicas, chirothecas, anulum, pyxidem, species, lavamenta, vascula, repositoria, vexillum causa memoriae, et, ut generali sermone loquamur . . . quod potest coamantis affere memoriam, amans poterit a coamante percipere . . ." (II, xxi; Walsh [ed. and trans.], *On Love*, 268).
- 59 All references to the *Roman de la rose* will be to Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la rose*, ed. Felix Lecoy, 3 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1965–66).
- 60 *The Origin and Development of the Story of Troilus and Criseyde* (London: Kegan Paul, 1908; rpt. New York, 1968), 43–66.
- 61 *On Love*, ed. and trans. Walsh, 30–31. In the proem to his *Ars amatoria*, Ovid describes himself as *praeceptor amoris* (17). He also explains that his knowledge has come not from divine inspiration but from experience: "Usus opus movet hoc: vati parete perito" (experience generates this work: learn from an experienced bard) (29).
- 62 A.M. Finoli (ed.) *Artes amandi da Maitre Elie ad Andrea Cappellano*. (Milan and Varese: Istituto editoriale cisalpino, 1969).

- 63 Another medieval writer of an art of love, Drouart la Vache, who “translates” Andreas Capellanus but also uses Ovid, creates an elaborate fiction for himself as a lover and teacher. At the end of the prologue to his *Livres d’amours* (1290), however, he insists, like Ovid, on the priority of his teaching function (*Li Livres d’amours de Drouart la Vache*, ed. Robert Bossuat [Paris: Champion, 1926], 133–36, 4).
- 64 One twelfth-century glossator, for example, interpreting Ovid’s line, “I have armed the Danaï against the Amazons” (*Ars amatoria*, III.1), expresses the book’s power in a typically medieval (and Ovidian) way: “Danaos iuuenes quia sicut dani fuere periti ad exsuperandum Troianos ita iuuenes sunt documentis ovidii facti cauti in decipiendis puellis. Puellas vocat amazones quia sicut amazones sunt rigide et dure et non applicantes amoris ita erant puelle donec ovidius instruxit eas” (London, BL MS Add. 14086, fol. 27v).
- Boccaccio himself dramatizes the power of Ovid’s *Ars* directly and explicitly in his *Filocolo*. The *Filocolo*’s young protagonists, Florio and Biancifiore, study “il santo libro di Ovidio” under their tutor’s guidance. Then, one day, having delighted in their reading, the two youngsters close their book and declare their passion for each other. As Biancifiore explains, “I think the force of these blessed verses which we are reading intently must have inflamed our minds with a strange burning, and set in motion in us what we have already seen they achieved in others” (*Filocolo*, II.4).
- 65 To compare Dante’s Virgil with Pandaro may at first seem far-fetched. Yet the *Commedia* and especially the early cantos of *Inferno* provide important images for the *Filostrato*. Moreover, the comparison is suggested by what appears to be a direct allusion. When Troilo accepts Pandaro as his guide, he mirrors Dante’s lines in accepting Virgil as *his* guide (*Inf.* II, 136–40). In language that seems to echo Dante’s directly, Troilo declares to Pandaro:

Pandaro mio, io mi ti raccomando,
tu savio, tu amico, tu sai tutto
ciò che bisogna a dar fine al mio lutto. (II.33.6–8)

If Dante embraces Virgil as his guide to heavenly vision, Troilo, in a precisely analogous way, accepts Pandaro as Ovidian preceptor in the quest for a very different kind of bliss.

- 66 *Origin*, 47.
- 67 *The Roman de la Rose: a Study in Allegory and Iconography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 143.
- 68 I quote from the Italian translation of the *Rose* into a sonnet sequence entitled *Il Fiore* and attributed to Dante:

Ragion si parte, quand’ella m’intese,
sanza piu tener meco parlamento,
che trovar non potea nullo argomento
di trarmi del laccio in ch’Amor mi prese.
co’ mie’ pensieri e fu’ in maggior tormento
assa’, ched i’ non fu’ al cominciamento:
non mi valea coverta di pavese.
Allor si piacque a Dio che ritornasse

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Amico a me, per darmi il su'consiglio.
Si tosto che mi vide, a me si trasse
e disse: "Amico, i' si mi maraviglio
che cisacun giorno dimagre e appasse:
dov'e il visaggio tu' chiaro e vermiglio?"

(*Il Fiore e Il Detto d'Amore*, ed. Gianfranco Contini [Milan: Mondadori, 1984], XLVII, 96).

- 69 Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la rose*, ed. Felix Lecoy, 3 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1966–75).
- 70 Leyden, MS Lat. Lips. 39; quoted by E.H. Alton, "Ovid in the Mediaeval Schoolroom," *Hermathena* 95 (1961), 73.
- 71 For a (rightly) ironic reading of this song, see Hollander, *Boccaccio's Two Venuses*, 50–51.
- 72 *Ars amatoria*, I, 33–34, 114.
- 73 In VIII.29, Boccaccio explicitly raises the issue of correct reading. Addressing young men who are moved by *amoroso disio*, he says that those who "read" Troilo's story "with a good heart" will not trust all women since young women are changeable and desirous of many loves.

5 BOCCACCIO'S *TESEIDA* AND THE TRIUMPH OF ARISTOTELIAN VIRTUE

- 1 Louvain, Centrale Bibiotheek, Katholieke Universiteit, Grand Séminaire, Malines, MS 1. For discussions of this bible, see François Avril, "Trois manuscrits napolitains des collections de Charles V et de Jean de Berry," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 127 (1969), 314–24; R. Maere, "Une Bible angevine de Naples au Séminaire de Malines," *Revue de l'art chrétien* 59 (1910), 25–34; C. de Clercq, "Miniaturen uit een Bijbel-Handschrift der XIVe-eeuw voortkomende uit Napels, nu berusten te Mechelen op het Groot Seminarie," *Kunst Adelt* 8 (1930); L. Dequeker, "Een XIVe-eeuw Bijbel uit het Arrascollege te leuven, nu op het Grootseminarie te Mechelen," *Hendelingen van de kon. kring voor oudheidkunde, letteren en kunst van Mechelen*, 60 (1966); C. de Clercq, "Le Miniaturiste napolitain Christophe Orimina," *Gutenberg Jahrbuch* (1968), 52–65; F. Bologna, *I pittori alla corte angioina di Napoli (1266–1414)* (Rome: U. Bozzi, 1969).
- 2 Cristoforo's collocation of the liberal arts with virtue – philosophy with sound ethical conduct – simply illustrates a scholastic commonplace. The true philosopher was, by definition, a morally good human being.
- 3 Aegidius himself was well known in the Angevin court and he dedicated a commentary on the second book of the Sentences to King Robert (Francesco Sabatini, *Napoli angioina* [Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1975] 17). For the king's commissioning of the *De regimine principum*, see *ibid.*, 71.
- 4 Giorgio Vasari records that Giotto painted images of famous men in a room of Castelnuovo during his time in Naples (1328–33/34), on orders from Robert of Anjou. These frescoes, depicting Alexander, Solomon, Hector, Aeneas, Achilles, Paris, Hercules, Samson, and Caesar, are now lost. But a corona of nine sonnets in Italian, written to explicate the paintings and still

extant, suggests the function of the murals as moral exempla. The sonnets are attributed to a Tuscan poet, apparently living at the Neapolitan court, who may have composed them for presentation to King Robert. (Interestingly enough, in one manuscript [Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale, II.1.157] the sonnets actually appear in the company of the *Teseida*.) For the text of the sonnets, see A. Altamura, "Affreschi e sonetti del '300 in Castelnuovo," *Fuידורו* 1 (1954), 174–75. For discussions of the frescoes and their attribution to Giotto, see, besides Altamura, Bologna, *I Pittori*, 219–23; Sabatini, *Napoli angioina*, 84. On Giotto's stay in Naples, see R. Filangieri di Candida, "Giotto à Napoli," *Archivio storico italiano* 95 (1937), 129–45.

5 As Avril observes:

L'importance accordée aux deux petites-filles de Robert d'Anjou, Jeanne et Marie, est une allusion directe au problème de succession qui se posa de façon dramatique en 1328 au roi de Naples à la suite de la mort prématurée de son fils, Charles de Calabre. Ce n'est qu'en 1330, après avoir perdu tout espoir d'obtenir un héritier male, que Robert d'Anjou se résolut à reconnaître Jeanne, l'aînée de ses petites-filles, comme héritière de la couronne de Naples. ("Trois manuscrits," 325)

6 *Cronaca di Partenope*, ed. Antonio Altamura (Naples: Società Editrice Napoletana, 1974), 137.

7 *Ibid.*, 138–39 (my translation).

8 As David Anderson puts it: "At least in its conception the *Teseida* was a product of Boccaccio's Neapolitan period." Anderson goes on to note that when Boccaccio refers to himself in his early works (through his narrator), he generally portrays himself as being associated with the court (*Before the Knight's Tale: Imitation of Classical Epic in Boccaccio's Teseida* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988], 58). For the date of Boccaccio's departure from Naples, see Vittore Branca, *Boccaccio: the Man and his Works*, trans. Richard Monges and Dennis J. McAuliffe (New York: New York University Press, 1976), 52–54. See also Branca, "Tradizione letteraria e cultura medievale nell' autobiografia romanzesca del Boccaccio," *Neubert Festschrift* 171 (1956), 56. On the probable date of the *Teseida*, see Branca, *Giovanni Boccaccio: Profilo biografico* (Florence: Sansoni, 1977), 5–8; Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale* 3–7.

9 For a careful analysis of the linguistic situation at Robert's court, see Sabatini, *Napoli angioina*, 83–85.

10 For the literary interests of the women in Robert's court in relation to Boccaccio's early poetry, see Sabatini, *ibid.*, 85.

11 For relationships between the mid-twelfth-century *romans antiques* and the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century prose versions, see Guy Raynaud de Lage, "Les Romans antiques dans l'histoire ancienne jusqu'à César," in his *Les Premiers Romans français* (Geneva: Droz, 1976), 55–86, and "Du Roman de Troie de Benoît au Roman de Troie en prose," *ibid.*, 205–10. The prose versions of the *romans antiques* that appeared in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries have not yet been thoroughly enough studied, though a considerable amount of useful information about them has been published. See Paul Meyer, "Les Premières Compilations françaises d'histoire ancienne," *Romania* 14 (1885), 36–81; K. Chesney, "A Neglected Prose Version of the *Roman de Troie*," *MÆ*,

- 11 (1942), 46–47; Brian Woledge, *Bibliographie des romans et nouvelles en prose française antérieurs à 1500* (Geneva: Droz, 1954), 56–58; and Woledge, *Supplément 1954–1973* (Geneva: Droz, 1975), items 78 and 171; Raynaud de Lage, “Du Roman de Troie,” 175–81; F. Viellard (ed.), *Le Roman de Troie en prose* (Bibliotheca Bodmeriana: Textes, 4) (Paris and Geneva: Droz, 1969); Clem C. Williams, “A Case of Mistaken Identity: Still Another Trojan Narrative in Old French Prose,” *MÆ* 53 (1984), 59–72. About two-thirds of the first redaction of the *Roman de Troie en prose* has been edited by Léopold Constans and Edmond Faral (Paris: Champion, 1922), vol. 1. Though a second volume was promised, which would have contained the final portion of the prose *Roman* and an Introduction, it never appeared. For the prose *Roman de Thèbes* in Naples, see Bernhard Degenhart and Annegrit Schmitt, “Frühe angiovinische Buchkunst in Neapel: die Illustrierung französischer Unterhaltungsprosa in neapolitanischen Scriptorien zwischen 1290 und 1320,” in Friedrich Piel and Jorg Traeger (eds.), *Festschrift Wolfgang Braunsfels* (Tubingen: Wasmuth, 1977), 71–92. See also Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale*, 91 and 168.
- 12 See Degenhart and Schmitt, “Die Illustrierung,” 71–92.
- 13 British Library MS Royal 20 D.1.
- 14 On the author's debt to Benoît, see Williams, “A Case,” esp. 64–69.
- 15 I am inclined to credit Boccaccio both with the grafting process and with the invention of the love story. But the possibility of a “lost source” has been much discussed by scholars. For a summary of alternative views on this issue, see Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale*, 12–13 and 30–31.
- 16 For a full description of the holograph manuscript of the *Teseida*, see Vandelli, “Un autografo della ‘Teseide,’” *SFI* 2 (1929), 5–76.
- 17 There is no way of knowing with certainty when Boccaccio purchased his copy of the *Thebaid* (now MS Plut. 38. 6, in the Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence). For further discussion of Boccaccio's glosses and his manuscript of Statius, see Alberto Limentani, “Tendenze della prosa del Boccaccio ai margini del ‘Teseida,’” *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 135 (1958), 524–51; A. Mazza, “L'inventario della ‘parva libreria’ di Santo Spirito e la biblioteca del Boccaccio,” *IMU* 9 (1966), 1–74; cf Robert Hollander, “The Validity of Boccaccio's Self-Exegesis in his *Teseida*,” *MedH* (n.s.) 8 (1977), 167.
- 18 See especially Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale*, ch. 1.
- 19 For Boccaccio's debt to Statius, see Vincenzo Crescini, *Contributo agli studi sul Boccaccio* (Turin: E. Loescher, 1887), ch. 9 and appendix. See also the later, very useful study by Alberto Limentani, “Boccaccio ‘traduttore’ di Stazio,” *Rassegna della letteratura italiana* 64 (1960), 231–42.
- 20 Anderson describes the difference very well:

As Boccaccio develops the general pattern of action in *Teseida* 3–6 according to the model of *Thebaid* 1–4, he invites us to watch the translation of Statius's principal characters into a different scale and perspective. This play of smaller events in the imitation against the solemn grandeur of its epic subtext does not take the parodic extreme of mock epic; the somewhat smaller scale of characters and events is matched by Boccaccio's mixture of high and middle styles. (*Before the Knight's Tale*, 70)

- 21 Throughout my argument, I assume that Boccaccio designed his glosses as an integral part of his composition from the start, though he may have written the marginal notes after he had finished the poem. There has been no detailed study of the date of the glosses, but most scholars who have considered the question argue for a date close to the poem's composition. On the date of the glosses, see especially S. Battaglia (ed.), *Teseida* (Florence: Sansoni, 1938), cviii. Robert Hollander was the first, as far as I know, to treat the *chiose* critically, taking them as a guide to authorial intention. In his valuable article on the glosses, he gives a full description and analysis of their character, concentrating his attention particularly on the important notes for Book VII. See his "Boccaccio's Self-Exegesis," 163–83. See also Vandelli, "Un autografo," 5–76.
- 22 Vittore Branca was the first to call attention to the artifice in Boccaccio's prologal love letters. See his seminal essay, "Schemi letterari e schemi autobiografici," in his *Boccaccio Medievale* (Florence: Sansoni, 1970), 191–249. See also Ernesto Travi, "L'introduzione al 'Teseida' e l'epistolografia del '500," in V. Branca and G. Padoan (eds.), *Boccaccio Venezia e il Veneto* (Florence: Olschki, 1979), 153–60.
- 23 Vittore Branca (ed.), *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vol. II (Verona: Mondadori, 1967), 245.
- 24 Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. Richard Green (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1962), Book I, Prose 1, 4.
- 25 University of California, Berkeley, MS UCB 95, f. 60r.
- 26 Janet Smarr has rightly called attention to the complexity of Fiammetta's role as reader in Boccaccio's poem. See *Boccaccio and Fiammetta: the Narrator as Lover* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 61–82.
- 27 For an excellent discussion of various forms of hypothetical questioning in the *Teseida*, see Eren Branch's essay, "Rhetorical Structures and Strategies in Boccaccio's *Teseida*," in Leigh A. Arrathoon (ed.), *The Craft of Fiction* (Rochester, Mich.: Solaris Press, 1984), 143–60.
- 28 For an allegorical interpretation of the first two books which is different from, but not incompatible with, my own "exemplary" reading of the first two books, see Smarr, *Boccaccio and Fiammetta*, esp. 64–69. See also Robert Hollander, *Boccaccio's Two Venuses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 53–54.
- 29 That the classical poets sought honor and fame for their art was a defining quality of their character, at least for some medieval schoolmasters. In a glossed twelfth-century copy of the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*, written in Italy (Carpentras, Bibliothèque Inguimbertaine, MS 369), the following description of the poet's *intentio* appears in a brief prose *vita* interposed between the two poems: "Intentio est ut in arte poetica se exercens adepta iam fama libri thebaidos eternam posteris faciat quae est potentissima omnium poetarum intentio ut testatur Ovidius" (His intention is so that, practicing the art of poetry [in undertaking his next poem], with the reputation already attained of the books of the *Thebaid*, he might achieve eternal [fame] for the future, which is the most powerful intention of all poets, as Ovid asserts.) In the invocation

- to his own poem, Boccaccio suggests indirectly that he is seeking the same kind of honor for his art.
- 30 Branca, *Tutte le opere*, vol. II, 651.
 - 31 Boethius popularized this image of the Muses as prostitutes, and it was used by opponents of poetry throughout the Middle Ages. In his *Invective contra medicum*, Petrarch takes the argument up in order to defend poetry (and the Muses) in terms Boccaccio also chooses in his later *Genealogie*.
 - 32 For a list of these and other phrases making the same or similar arguments throughout the *chiose*, see Hollander, "Boccaccio's Self-Exegesis," 177, n. 17.
 - 33 In the glossator's argument, Boccaccio enjoys a superiority over the ancients because he understands that he is dissembling while the ancient poets may have believed the stories they told.
 - 34 It also aligns him with ideas about the classical poets as philosophers promulgated them in the medieval schools. Boccaccio's self-presentation as a philosophical *auctor*, highly skilled in rhetorical feigning or *finzioni*, suggests that he was aiming for a more thorough-going, dynamic identification with medieval ideas of the classical poet than his French forebears.
 - 35 Here Boccaccio may be following Benoît de Sainte-Maure and his prose redactors in the tradition of the *Roman de Troie*. They likewise emphasize that a Greek text is the ultimate source of their translations. As the author of the "southern" version of the prose *Troie* puts it: "Ensi sercant vint a ses mains l'estoire qe Daire escrit en lenge [*sic*: langue] gresioises a cellui tens qu li siege estoit a Troie" (Chesney, "*Roman de Troie*," 50).
 - 36 Anderson, who also reads *Teseida* I and II as a "positive moral exemplum," points to the influence of Virgil's Aeneas and of *Thebaid* V in Boccaccio's shaping of Teseo's character and military exploits against the Amazons (*Before the Knight's Tale*, 68–70).
 - 37 Victoria Kirkham has recently argued that Aristotle's *Ethics*, together with Thomas Aquinas' commentary on it, resonate in the *Decameron* ("An Allegorically Tempered *Decameron*," *Italica* 62 [1985], 1–23). In this article, she follows Janet Smarr in taking the *Teseida* as an allegorical study, through its three male protagonists, of the appetites in the soul as these were distinguished by Saint Thomas following Aristotle (3). While I agree with Kirkham in discerning Aristotelian influence, I argue that the portrait of Teseo in the *Teseida* is to be read not allegorically but symbolically as a detailed study of Aristotelian virtue in the ideal ruler. I suggest that Boccaccio, like the *Eneas*-poet, designed his narrative as a guide for princes. For discussion of symbolism and allegory in the *Teseida*, see Janet Smarr, "The *Teseida*, Boccaccio's Allegorical Epic," *NEMLA Italian Studies* 1 (1977), 29–35; and Victoria Kirkham, "Chiuso parlare in Boccaccio's *Teseida*," in A.S. Bernardo and A. Pellegrini (eds.), *Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio: Studies in the Italian Trecento in Honor of Charles S. Singleton* (Binghamton, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1983), 305–51.
 - 38 For a discussion of Boccaccio's copy of Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*, see Anna Maria Cesari, "L'Etica di Aristotele del Codice Ambrosiano A 204 inf.: un autografo del Boccaccio," *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, ser. 9, 5–6 (1966–67),

- 69–100. For the probable date at which Boccaccio copied the manuscript, see 81–94. Cesari concludes that Boccaccio was likely to have copied his Aristotle while he was still in the lively intellectual environment of King Robert's court at Naples.
- 39 The date of Fra Paolino's birth is unknown. In 1315–16, Robert of Naples assigned him as his emissary to settle a political argument and in a letter of 1321 from Robert to Paolino, the latter is called his counselor. For details of his life, see Adolfo Mussafia (ed.), *Trattato de regimine rectoris di Fra Paolino Minorita* (Vienna: Tendler, 1868), v–vi.
- 40 This system, largely based on the Roman Stoic tradition, was fully developed during the course of the twelfth century and appeared over and over in treatises on the virtues from that time until the end of the Middle Ages. For a fuller discussion, see ch. 7, 262–81 *passim*.
- 41 See, for example, *Trattato*, chs. 30–31, 40–42.
- 42 *Trattato*, 16–33.
- 43 For the popularity and wide diffusion of Aegidius' treatise, see G. Boffito, *Saggio di bibliografia Egidiana* (Florence: Olschki, 1911), 7–10.
- 44 Ugo Mariani, *Scrittori politici agostiniani del secolo XIV* (Florence: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 1927), 25.
- 45 Mariani, *Scrittori*, 37 and 113.
- 46 *De regimine principum libri*, III, ed. F. Hieronymus Samaritanus (Rome: Zannettus, 1607; repr. 1967), 51:
- Philosophus circa finem v. Ethicorum praeter Prudentiam, & Iustitiam, enumera 10. virtutes morales, videlicet, Fortitudinem, Temperantiam, Honoris amativa[m], Magnanimitatem, Largitatem, Magnificentiam, Mansuetudinem, Veritatem, Affabilitatem, & Eutrapeliam . . . Igitur computata Iustitia, & Prudentia duodecim sunt virtutes morales.
- (The Philosopher, near the end of the fifth [book] of the Ethics, besides Prudence and Justice, lists ten moral virtues, namely, Fortitude, Temperance, Love of Honor, Magnanimity, Generosity, Magnificence, Mercy, Honesty, Affability, and Moderation in Games . . . Therefore, counting Justice and Prudence, there are twelve moral virtues.)
- 47 *De regimine*, 55.
- 48 For an assessment of Aegidius' independence, see Mariani, *Scrittori*, 54.
- 49 See note 3. For King Robert's library and his acquisition of books, see also Romolo Caggese, *Roberto d'Angiò e i suoi tempi* (Florence: Bemporad, 1930), II, 368–74; Cornelia G. Coulter, "The Library of the Angevin Kings at Naples," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 75 (1944), 141–55; G. Mazzatinti, *La Biblioteca dei re d'Aragona* (Rocca San Casciano: Cappelli, 1897), i–vi.
- 50 As Anderson points out, Aegidius came directly under Robert's patronage. In addition, one of Boccaccio's most admired and learned teachers – Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro, an Augustinian friar – was a disciple and proselytizer of Aegidius' work (*Before the Knight's Tale*, 175–76). For further discussion, see Rudolph Arbesmann, "Der Augustinereremitenorden und der Beginn der humanistischen Bewegung," *Augustiniana* 14 (1964), 250–314.
- 51 Smarr, "The *Teseida*," 29–35. See also Kirkham, "An Allegorically Tempered *Decameron*," 3; Hollander, "Boccaccio's Self-Exegesis," 163–83; and Kirkham, "Chiuso parlare," 305–51.

- 52 By the same token, of course, the details of the narrative may, by their very nature as concrete, irreducible storial *instances* invite interpretations of events (and virtue) other than those “officially” intended. This is a danger (or a poetic possibility) Boccaccio faced in composing both his *Filostrato* and his *Teseida* as *storie*. Through them, he, like his French predecessors in the tradition of the *roman antique*, raises important ethical questions and invites moral interpretation. Boccaccio himself, it seems to me, constructs his poem so as to encourage an ideal reading along the lines I suggest in this chapter. But the narrative itself provides enough internal tension to allow its public alternative views of Teseo’s conduct and that of the young lovers who become his protégés.
- 53 *De regimine*, I, 1, 5, pp. 14–15: “Est . . . diligenter notandum, quod sicut materia per debitas transmutationes consequitur suam perfectionem & forma[m], sic homo per rectas & debitas operationes consequitur suam perfectionem & felicitatem . . . per opera nostra mereamur consequi finem, vel felicitatem. (It must be carefully noted that just as matter, through requisite transmutations, achieves its perfection and form, so man, through right and appropriate actions achieves his perfection and happiness . . . through our deeds we may merit to achieve our end, or happiness.)
- 54 Later on, the same author offers another larger argument in favor of the subjugation of women as well as children: “pueri & mulieres . . . magis videntur esse insecutores passionum, quam viri, quia vir est praestantior ratione. sed cum temperantia . . . ipsas passiones moderet, ad quas mulieres maxime incitantur” (boys and women seem to be more followers of passion than men, because a man is superior in reason, but with temperance . . . he moderates his passions, to which women are especially aroused.) (II, 1, 13, p. 258).
- 55 “Appetenda est enim punitio propter amorem & zelum iustitiae, vel propter amorem Reipubl[icae] quia sine ea Resp[ublica] durare non posset” (For punishment must be desired on account of love and zeal for justice, or on account of love for the Republic, because without it the Republic cannot endure) (I, 2, 27, p. 130).
- 56 “Amplius licet Fortitudo sit circa pericula bellica, reprimendo timores, & moderando audacias: principalis tamen est circa repressionem timorum quam circa moderationem audaciarum . . . Difficilius est autem habere se fortiter, & constanter in sustinendo bella, quod requirit durabilitatem & tempus, quam in aggrediendo, quod subito fieri potest” (Granted that Fortitude is greater in respect to dangers relating to war, in repressing fear and moderating boldness. Yet it is more basically related to the repression of fear than to the moderation of boldness . . . However, it is more difficult to maintain oneself courageously and steadily in continuing a war, which requires endurance and time, than in attacking, which can be done quickly.) (I, 2, 13, p. 85).
- 57 In his *De regimine* Aegidius devotes special attention to the good warrior’s skill at swimming. “Inde,” he writes, “est quod apud Romanos antiquitus consuetudo erat, quod iuvenes futuri bellatores postquam per magnam partem diei exercitati essent ad arma, si tempus erat natationi congruum,

- ducebantur ad fluuium, vt artem natandi addiscerent. immo non solum pedites, sed equites, & etiam ipsos equos ad natandum exercebant” (Whence it is that among the Romans it was an ancient custom that young men – future soldiers – after they had practiced for the greater part of the day with arms, if there was a time suitable for swimming, they were led to the river so that they might learn the art of swimming – indeed, not only foot soldiers, but cavalry. And they even gave their horses practice at swimming.) (III, 3, 7, p. 574).
- 58 *Ibid.*, 17, pp. 602–3.
- 59 For Aegidius’ discussion of inventive military strategies under the princely virtue of prudence, see *Ibid.*, I, 2, 61.
- 60 See p. 169 above.
- 61 *De regimine*, I, 2, 6, p. 61.
- 62 This exchange of letters may owe something to a comparable epistolary exchange between Alexander the Great and the Amazons in Julius Valerius’ *Res gestae Alexandri Macedonis*. See the edition by Bernard Kuebler (Leipzig: Teubner, 1888), 151–55.
- 63 For these few stanzas, Teseo shows an unbecoming intemperance in the terms outlined by Aegidius Romanus. As Aegidius observes, “Ideo intemperati sunt seruiles, & bestiales. Bestia enim, quia deficit intellectu, naturaliter est quid seruile. Si ergo indecens est Regem, cuius est alijs dominari, esse bestialem & seruilem: indecens est ipsum esse intemperatum” (On that account, those who are intemperate are servile and bestial. For a beast, because he is deficient in intellect, is naturally servile. Therefore, it is indecorous that a king, whose [role] is to rule others, should be bestial and servile: it is indecorous that he should be intemperate.) (I, 2, 15, 97).
- 64 On the question of whether or not Boccaccio invented the story of Arcita and Palemone, see note 15 above.
- 65 In the same narrative comment, the glossator also emphasizes Tideus’ heroic triumph when, as Polynices’ messenger to the unjust Etiocles, he is ambushed. In the poet’s argument, Tideus’ fortitude has considerable importance in the development of Teseo’s character. Teseo takes the Theban’s heroism as a model for his own valor so that Tideus’ story affects Teseo’s in an exemplary way. Just so, we must assume, Boccaccio expected his account of Teseo’s audacity to serve as a mirror for contemporary princes.
- 66 *De regimine*, I, 2, 3, p. 55.
- 67 For a discussion of Boccaccio’s imitation of Statius’ temple of Clementia in the *Thebaid*, see Anderson, *Before the Knight’s Tale*, 160–66.
- 68 Aegidius’ definitions of the virtues – like those of most other medieval moralists – are precise and rigorous. They offered medieval princes, to whom treatises like the *De regimine* were addressed, clear standards of conduct against which they and their subjects could judge their performance. In their literary portraits of princes, the poets, like the moralists, seem to have been more concerned with moral than with psychological delineations of their protagonists.
- 69 *De regimine*, I, 2, 23, p. 118.

- 70 *Ibid.* p. 108: “Nam principaliter & primò, homo debet esse magnificus circa diuina, constituendo (si facultates tribuant) templa magnifica, sacrificia honorabilia, præparationes dignas” (For chiefly and above all, man ought to be magnificent in relation to divine [beings], in building (if his abilities allow it) magnificent temples, [arranging] honorable sacrifices, worthy preparations).
- 71 *Ibid.* 19, pp. 108–09: “Magna autem opera possunt dici illa, vel quæ durant per totam vitam, cuiusmodi sunt domus, & ædificia. Vel quæ fiunt raro in tota vita, cuiusmodi sunt nuptiæ, & militiæ . . . Sic etiam decet magnificum, nuptias, & militias, & talia quæ raro occurrunt, magnifice facere” (Those works can be called great which last through a whole life, such as a house and a building; or those which are done rarely in a lifetime, such as marriages, military operations . . . For thus it is appropriate to the magnificent [man] to conduct magnificently marriages, battles, and such [events] that occur rarely).
- 72 See also chapter 3, pp. 105–6 and note 76.
- 73 See Aegidius’ discussion of games appropriate for princes in *De regimine*, 1, 2, 30, pp. 136–38.
- 74 *Ibid.*, 3, p. 55. Aegidius defines *eutrapelia* as “vero sive bona versio . . . quando aliquis sic se habet in ludis, vt non fit histrio, quod de omnibus velit ludere: nec fit agrestis, quod de nullo velit ludere: sed fit Eutrapelus & bene se vertens, vt se habeat circa ludos prout expedit” (When anyone thus finds himself in games, he does not play the actor, because he wants to play in all things; nor does he play the country rustic, because he does not want to play at all: but he enacts the eutrapelic [man], applying himself well, so that he conducts himself in relation to games according to what is expedient). Victoria Kirkham usefully studies the Aristotelian virtue of *eutrapelia* in relation to the *Decameron* in her recent article, “The Word, the Flesh, and the *Decameron*,” *RPh* 41 (1987), 127–49; see esp. 134–35.
- 75 Boccaccio’s description of this temple and its wall paintings probably owes a great debt to Virgil’s description of Juno’s temple in the *Aeneid* (1, 446–93). In that temple, Aeneas sees and weeps over the story of the Trojan war recounted on the walls.
- 76 Hollander faults Boccaccio for an “inconsistent” treatment of Juno in her “three main roles in the *Teseida*.” She is, he says, “the opposer of the Thebans . . . the jealous wife of Jove . . . the goddess of matrimony.” And he concludes that “the three roles have little, really nothing, to do with one another” (*Boccaccio’s Two Venuses*, 192, n. 170). In fact, however, the roles are complementary and help to define just the themes which interest Hollander in his important study. In Boccaccio’s mythography, Juno as “dea de’ matrimonii” (Gloss for x, 40, 2) naturally opposes adultery and other kinds of illegitimate love. She hates the Thebans because of her husband Jove’s adulteries with Theban women, and, while she opposes Palemone and Arcita in their foolish passion, she approves of Palemone’s marriage to Emilia.
- 77 Boccaccio insists on this identification in his glosses. See, for example, the glosses for iv, 31 and x, 27 (Branca [ed.], *Tutte le opere*, 363 and 576).
- 78 In his *De regimine*, Aegidius seeks to demonstrate that “sine humilitate nullus

- potest esse magnanimus" (no one can be magnanimous without humility) (1, 2, 122ff.), and he links humility with reverence.
- 79 For an interesting contemporary parallel to Teseo's oration, see Geri d'Arezzo's epistle, modeled on Seneca, to the Neapolitan, Bernard d'Aquino. This letter offers consolation for the death of Robert of Anjou's son, Charles of Calabria, and was written in 1328, a year after the young duke's death. (A. Altamura, *La letteratura ell'età angioina* [Naples: 5. Viti, 1952], 93–99.)
- 80 Epistle CVII to Lucilius and the *De consolatione ad Marciam* are likely candidates. Taken together they contain precisely the arguments Teseo presents. In addition, the Epistle concludes with a celebration of Jupiter very much like the one Palemone offers as part of his response to Teseo.
- 81 As he begins his oration Teseo exactly echoes the theme that dominates the *De remediis*: "Quidquid est natum, moritur, quidquid moritur, natum est" (Seneca, *L. Annaei Senecae opera*, ed. F. Haase, vol. III [Leipzig: Teubner, 1887], 446). Teseo also borrows from Seneca or the *De remediis* his arguments concerning the good of an early death, the disappearance of mountains ("dure pietre" in Boccaccio) and rivers, and the importance of making a virtue of necessity. On the popularity of the *De remediis* in the medieval schools, see Robert Bultot, "La *Chartula* et l'enseignement du mépris du monde dans les écoles et les universités médiévales," *Studi Medievali* 8 (1967), 787–834. A charming translation into Old French of the *De remediis*, made by a young sergeant-at-arms for King Charles V in 1402, bears witness to the treatise's use as a guide for princes (BN MS fr. 1090).
- 82 Piero Boitani, for example, writes: "the entire first Book . . . like the second, is not structurally necessary to the poem as a whole . . . I suggest that Boccaccio's reason for these things [including the first two books] is that he wishes to write a learned work and is fascinated by his own exotic fantasy" (*Chaucer and Boccaccio* [Oxford: Medium Ævum Monographs, 1977], 111–12).
- 83 *De regimine*, 1, 2, 97.
- 84 *Ibid.*, 134.
- 85 It is not without significance that Pentheus was the ruler of Thebes who most outrageously opposed Bacchus and thereby won his death. I am grateful to Mark Morford for pointing out the ethical and political contrast Boccaccio thus implies between the irreverent Penteo (Arcita) and pious Teseo.
- 86 It is interesting to observe that Boccaccio withholds the myth behind this disguise name until Book v, where it appears in the gloss for *ottava* 58.
- 87 At v, 30, Palemone prays to the moon to help him in his love. This prayer and its surrounding action, enacted in the moon's light, actually represents the lowest point in the story when the two lovers are most fully trapped by love, most inclined, therefore, to bestial behavior. Forty-four stanzas later, Teseo appears and immediately sets about transforming chaos into order. He forgives the two lovers and sets plans in motion for games which will replace foolish love with a legitimate marriage. For a different account of the poem's central point, see Kirkham, "Chiuso parlare," 334.
- 88 Already in Book III, when he agrees to release Arcita from prison at Peritoo's request, Teseo shows his liberality. But the full study of the virtues proper to

the concupiscible appetite begins with the prince's forgiveness of Palemone and Arcita, the honor he shows them even as prisoners, and his organization of the military "giuoco" or game.

- 89 *De regimine*, I, 2, 3, p. 55.
- 90 Hollander is right to oppose Branca's opinion that the young lovers' view of Fortune is shared by Boccaccio (Branca, *Tutte le opere*, II, 858–59). "The context of their complaints," as Hollander points out, "is likely to make [the lovers] seem vain and wrong" (*Boccaccio's Two Venuses*, 179, n. 106).
- 91 The narrator tells us, at the end of Book VII, that Palemone also delivers a speech of exhortation to his followers, but Boccaccio invents no oration for him.
- 92 Boccaccio would have been right to make such an assumption, as the history of *Teseida* criticism attests. Hollander was the first scholar to assert the importance of the glosses for understanding the poem ("Boccaccio's Self-Exegesis" and *Boccaccio's Two Venuses*).
- 93 Hollander rightly notes the central importance of Boccaccio's distinction between reasonable and corrupt judgment in relation to the irascible and concupiscible appetites (*Boccaccio's Two Venuses*, 59–60). Like Aegidius Romanus, Boccaccio studies the princely virtues as a reasonable mean between two forms of excess in both kinds of appetite.
- 94 See, for example, the sculpted image of Pride as a man falling from his horse in the series of virtues and vices on the west façade of Chartres Cathedral.
- 95 In Book II of his *De regimine*, which is devoted to the ruler's management of his household, Aegidius offers parallel instruction in the prince's proper treatment of his wife. See esp. II, I, 15, p. 263.
- 96 I am grateful to Winthrop Wetherbee for pointing out to me, in persuasive detail, his own "alternative" readings of key episodes in the *Teseida*, particularly in Books I and II.
- 97 For the date of Boccaccio's departure from Naples and of his *Teseida*, see n. 8 above. For a detailed reconstruction of the examination, see E.H. Wilkins, "The Coronation of Petrarch," *Speculum* 18 (1943), 155–97, esp. 180–85.
- 98 For accounts of Robert's court, see ch. 4, n. 1. Petrarch in his letters describes Robert as "the most famous king of Europe" (*Famil.*, IV, 2), "illustrious, divine, wise, magnanimous, merciful, king among kings" (*Famil.*, XII, 2), and "the king worthy of heaven and not of earth" (*Famil.*, XII, 7). Petrarch promised to write a poem for Robert – *Affrica* – in which he would have sung with Virgilian comeliness the "wonders" of the greatest of contemporary princes.
- 99 Wilkins, "Coronation of Petrarch," 181–5.
- 100 Sabatini, *Napoli angioina*, 79–80, and Wilkins, "Coronation of Petrarch," 181–5.
- 101 The precise date of Petrarch's coronation as poet laureate is discussed by Carlo Godi, "La 'Collatio Laureationis' del Petrarca," *IMU* 13 (1970), 3–7.
- 102 "inter poete et ystorici et philosophi, seu moralis seu naturalis, officium hoc interesse, quod inter nubilosum et serenum celum interest, cum utrobique eadem sit claritas in subiecto, sed, pro captu spectantium, diversa. Eo tamen

dulcior fit poesis, quo laboriosius quesita veritas magis atque magis inventa dulcescit” (Between the poet and the historian and the philosopher, whether moral or natural, the task differs just as there is a difference between a cloudy and a serene sky, since in both there is clarity as to the subject but they differ in their means of capturing their public). (Godi, “La ‘Collatio Laureationis,’” 21). Petrarch rests his case for poetry on ancient and venerable sources: Lactantius Firmianus’ *Divine Institutes* and Macrobius’ commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis*.

- 103 Boccaccio had ample opportunity to hear about Petrarch’s poetic theory in the late 1330s from his friend, Padre Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro. Dionigi was a brilliant teacher of rhetoric, poetry, and classical history and had made commentaries on Virgil, Ovid, Seneca, and Valerius Maximus as well as the rhetorical texts of Aristotle. He was invited by Robert to leave the Vacluse, Petrarch’s “Helicon,” to come to Naples in 1337. Boccaccio became his avid student and learned from him, among other things, to admire Petrarch’s poetry. For an account of Dionigi’s learning and his relationship to Boccaccio, see Sabatini, *Napoli angioina*, 78–79; G. Di Stefano, “Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro, amico del Petrarca e maestro del Boccaccio,” *Atti dell’ Accademia di Scienze di Torino* (Classe di scienze morale, 96), Part 2 (1960–62), 272–314; G. Padoan, Review of Di Stefano, *Studi sul Boccaccio* 1 (1963), 540–44. For a summary of the history of *Teseida* criticism that lies behind Boitani’s assessment, see Anderson, *Before the Knight’s Tale*, “Introduction,” 1–37.
- 104 Translation by C.G. Osgood, *Boccaccio on Poetry* (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1930), 60. The Latin text is as follows:

fateor illos non nunquam obscuros esse, sed extricables semper, si sanus ad eos accesserit intellectus . . . Nec sit quis existimet a poetis veritates fictionibus invidia conditas, aut ut velint omnino absconditorum sensum negare lectoribus, aut ut artificiosiores appareant, sed ut, que apposita viluissent, labore ingeniorum quesita et diversimode intellecta comperta tandem faciant cariora.
(Genealogie deorum gentilium libri, ed. Vincenzo Romano [Bari: Laterza, 1951], vol. II, Book 14, ch. 12, 715–16.)
- 105 Osgood (trans.), *Boccaccio on Poetry*, 62. Romano (ed.) *Genealogie*, 14, 12, 717: “Et ut iterum dixerim, volentibus intelligere et nexus ambiguos enodare legendum est, insistendum vigilandumque, atque interrogandum, et omni modo premende cerebri vires! Et si non una via potest quis pervenire, quo dupit, intret alteram, et si obstant obices, arripiat aliam, donec, si valiture sint vires, lucidum illi appareat, quod primo videbatur obscurum.”
- 106 I borrow this term from Edward Said, who uses it in very different context to describe the writing of several modern writers including Joyce, Yeats, Eliot, Conrad, Freud, Mann, and Nietzsche. While Chaucer remains thoroughly medieval in his central concern with normative wisdom, his poetry seems to move him in the direction of the modern text which, as Said puts it, has “no central point or central trajectory.” For a provocative discussion of this subject, see Said, *Beginnings* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 10.
- 107 A medieval writer would not have made a strong distinction between “literary” and “philosophical” for the two were regarded as being more or less the same.

6 SAVING THE POETRY: AUTHORS, TRANSLATORS, TEXTS, AND READERS IN CHAUCER'S *BOOK OF TROILUS AND CRISEYDE*

- 1 While I have used Stephen Barney's edition of *Troilus* throughout this chapter, I have also made constant reference to Barry Windeatt's invaluable edition and notes in his *Troilus and Criseyde* (London and New York: Longman, 1984). See Introduction, note 1.
- 2 See the opening lines of Horace's *Ars poetica* and the commentary by Pseudo-Acro, who calls the Horatian principle here invoked *oeconomia* (*Scholia in sermones epistulas artemque poeticam*, in vol. II of *Pseudoacronis Scholia in Horatium Vetustiora*, ed. Otto Keller, vol. II (Leipzig: Teubner, 1867), 309.
- 3 On Antigone's love song, see James I. Wimsatt, "Guillaume de Machaut and Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," *MÆ* 45 (1976), 277-93.
- 4 For previous discussions of form and genre in relation to *Troilus*, see Karl Young, "Chaucer's 'Troilus and Criseyde' as Romance," *PMLA* 53 (1938), 38-63; D.W. Robertson, Jr., "Chaucerian Tragedy," *ELH* 19 (1952), 1-37; J. Burke Severs, "The Tales of Romance," in Beryl Rowland (ed.), *Companion to Chaucer Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 229-46; Paul Strohm, "Storie, Spelle, Geste, Romaunce, Tragedie: Generic Distinctions in the Middle English Troy Narratives," *Speculum* 46 (1971), 348-59; P.G. Ruggiers, "Notes Towards a Theory of Tragedy in Chaucer," *ChauR* 8 (1973), 89-99; Robert M. Jordan, "Chaucerian Romance?" *YFS* 51 (1974), 223-34; Rose A. Zimbaro, "Creator and Created: the Generic Perspective in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," *ChauR* 11 (1977), 283-98; Monica McAlpine, *The Genre of Troilus and Criseyde* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978); John P. McCall, *Chaucer Among the Gods* (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979), 87-122 *passim*. See also Alice Kaminsky, *Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde and the Critics* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1980), ch. 4, "The Formalistic Approach to *Troilus*," 73-118.
- 5 Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 132.
- 6 *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1989), 118.
- 7 "'Troilus and Criseyde': a Reconsideration," in John Lawlor (ed.), *Patterns of Love and Courtesy* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1966), 106. Other critics, observing the poem's complexity, have found, as I do, coherence and artistic purpose in its structure. Robert Payne argues that Chaucer turned "Boccaccio's two-level work into a multiplex one which may appear variously stratified as the angle of view changes" (*The Key of Remembrance* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963], 179). See also Robert M. Jordan, *Chaucer and the Shape of Creation: the Aesthetic Possibilities of Inorganic Structure* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 70-109.
- 8 One notable exception is Karl Young in his article "'Troilus and Criseyde' as Romance."

- 9 On this important direction see, besides Strohm, David Aers, *Chaucer, Langland, and the Creative Imagination* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), and *Community, Gender, and Individual Identity* (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988), 117–52; Stephen Knight, *Geoffrey Chaucer* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 32–65; Paul Olson, *The Canterbury Tales and the Good Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).
- 10 The phrase is Knight's (*Geoffrey Chaucer*, 3).
- 11 For useful discussions of love in *Troilus*, see A.C. Spearing, *Chaucer: Troilus and Criseyde* (London: Edward Arnold, 1976), 23–35; Davis Taylor, "The Terms of Love: a Study of Troilus's Style," *Speculum* 51 (1976), 69–90; Stephen Barney, "Troilus Bound," *Speculum* 47 (1972), 445–58; Barbara Newman, "'Feynede Loves,' Feigned Lore, and Faith in Trouthe," in Stephen Barney (ed.), *Chaucer's Troilus* (Hamden, Conn.: Shoestring Press, 1980), 257–76; McAlpine, *The Genre of Troilus and Criseyde*, 121–34; Winthrop Wetherbee, *Chaucer and the Poets: an Essay on Troilus and Criseyde* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 44–86 and *passim*.
- 12 On the nature of the "tragedy" in *Troilus*, see McAlpine, *The Genre of Troilus and Criseyde*; McCall, *Chaucer Among the Gods*, 87–122 and *passim*; and Robertson, "Chaucerian Tragedy."
- 13 Chaucer typically translates the extramarital Ovidian *fine amor*/perpetto amore of the French and Italian *romans antiques* as loving "paramours." See, for example, Diomedes's avowal to Criseyde as he courts her that he has never "lovede . . . womman [except Criseyde] . . . / As paramours, ne nevere shal no mo" (v.118). See also *Troilus*, v.332, and *Knight's Tale*, 2112.
- 14 Most commentaries on the *Ars amatoria* explain, following the poet, that Ovid's *intentio* was "ostendere quo modo ipsa puella possit inveniri, inventa exorari, exorata retineri" (to show in what way a girl can be found, having been found, persuaded, having been persuaded, retained) (Huygens, *Accessus*, 33). Troilus adds his rational views about the pain involved in each of these three projects, as well as the pain of losing in love.
- 15 These are lines Chaucer has added to his source.
- 16 On Chaucer's knowledge and use of the *Heroides* and Ovid's other poems as well as the medieval commentary tradition on Ovid, see Edgar F. Shannon, *Chaucer and the Roman Poets* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1929; rpt. 1964); Sanford Meech, "Chaucer and the *Ovid Moralisé*," *PMLA* 46 (1931), 513–69; and "Chaucer and an Italian Translation of the *Heroides*," *PMLA* 45 (1930), 110–28; Mary Edwards Shaner, "The *Legend of Good Women* and Medieval Commentaries on the *Heroides*," unpublished B.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1970; Alastair Minnis, "John Gower, *Sapiens* in Ethics and Politics," *MÆ* 49 (1980), 207–29.
- 17 For Chaucer's knowledge of Benoît, see Clem C. Williams, "A Case of Mistaken Identity: Still Another Trojan Narrative in Old French Prose," *MÆ* 53 (1984), 59–72. On his use of Joseph of Exeter, see R.K. Root, "Chaucer's Dares," *MP* 15 (1917–18), 1–22. C. David Benson argues that Guido delle Colonne also contributed to the making of Chaucer's *Troilus*. See *The History of Troy in Middle English Literature: Guido delle Colonne's Historia destructionis*

- Troiae in *Medieval England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Brewer, 1980), 133–42. See also Benson, "'O Nyce World': What Chaucer Really Found in Guido delle Colonne's History of Troy," *ChauR* 13 (1979), 308–15; and George L. Hamilton, *The Indebtedness of Chaucer's Troilus to Guido delle Colonne's Historia Trojana* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1903).
- 18 This description is Joseph of Exeter's in the prologue to his *Bellum Troianum*, in Gildas Roberts (trans.), *The Iliad of Dares Phrygius* (Cape Town: Balkema, 1970), 3.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 Guido de Columnis, *Historia destructionis Troiae*, ed. Nathaniel E. Griffin (Cambridge, Mass.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1936; Kraus rpt., 1970), 4.
- 21 The phrase is Guido's (*Historia*, 4).
- 22 Guido de Columnis, *Historia*, 3–4.
- 23 On the tradition that lies behind Chaucer's commendation of his book to the great Latin *auctores*, see J.S.P. Tatlock, "The Epilog of Chaucer's *Troilus*," *MP* 18 (1921), 625–30. It is significant that he invokes Homer and not Dares. Homer is specifically described by most of Chaucer's sources for the Troy story as a liar.
- 24 See A.C. Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 32–33.
- 25 In a recent article, which appeared too late for my use, Kate Bauer also calls attention to the narrator's *compassioun* as an "underlying theme" added by Chaucer to his source ("Criseyde's *Routhe*," *Comitatus* 19 [1988], 1–19).
- 26 This is a definition of *compassio* given by Saint Bernard in his *Liber de modo bene vivendi ad sororem*, PL 184, 1225.
- 27 For the narrator as an historian, see Morton Bloomfield, "Distance and Predestination in 'Troilus and Criseyde,'" *PMLA* 72 (1957), 14–26; Alastair Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity* (Cambridge and Totowa, N.J.: Rowan and Littlefield, 1982), 67. For a critique of Minnis's position, however, see Bella Millet, "Chaucer, Lollius, and the Medieval Theory of Authorship," in Paul Strohm and Thomas Heffernan (eds.) *Reconstructing Chaucer* (Knoxville: New Chaucer Society, University of Tennessee, 1985), 93–104. On the narrator's "simplicity" and "naiveté," see E. Talbot Donaldson, "The Ending of 'Troilus,'" in his *Speaking of Chaucer* (New York: Norton, 1970; London: Athlone, 1970), 84–101.
- 28 For a wide array of competing critiques of the *Troilus*-narrator, see Bernard Huppé, "The Unlikely Narrator: the Narrative Strategy of the *Troilus*," in John P. Hermann and John J. Burke, Jr., (eds.), *Signs and Symbols in Chaucer's Poetry* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1981), 179–94; Eugene Vance, "Mervelous Signals: Poetics, Sign Theory, and Politics in Chaucer's *Troilus*," *NLH* 10 (1979), 293–337; Evan Carton, "Complicity and Responsibility in Pandarus' Bed and Chaucer's Art," *PMLA* 94 (1979), 47–61; Richard H. Osberg, "Between the Motion and the Act: Intentions and Ends in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," *ELH* 50 (1983), 1–25.
- 29 Elizabeth Salter, "*Troilus and Criseyde*: Poet and Narrator," in Mary J.

- Carruthers and Elizabeth Kirk (eds.), *Acts of Interpretation* (Norman, Okla.: Pilgrim Books, 1982), 281–91.
- 30 Waswo, "The Narrator," 12.
- 31 "Chaucer's *Troilus*, Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, and the Poetics of Closure," *PQ* 64 (1985), 180.
- 32 As Barry Windeatt, one of the most recent and thorough scholars of the subject, puts it, "however transformed in its overall structure and overlaid in its detailed texture, the Italian original nonetheless remains within the *Troilus* at its core" ("Chaucer and the *Filostrato*," in Piero Boitani (ed.), *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983], 163). The classic but controversial study on Chaucer's debt to Boccaccio in writing his *Troilus* is the one by C.S. Lewis, "What Chaucer Really Did to *Il Filostrato*," *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association* 17 (1932), 56–75. See also Barry Windeatt, "The 'Paynted Proces': Italian to English in Chaucer's *Troilus*," *English Miscellany*, 26–27 (1977–78), 79–103; R.P. apRoberts, "Love in the *Filostrato*," *ChauR* 7 (1972), 1–26; P.A. Knapp, "Boccaccio and Chaucer on Cassandra," *PQ* 56 (1977), 413–17; Robert W. Frank, Jr., "*Troilus and Criseyde*: the Art of Amplification," in *Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies: Essays in Honor of Francis Lee Utley* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 155–71; P.M. Kean, "Chaucer's Dealings with a Stanza of *Il Filostrato* and the Epilogue of *Troilus and Criseyde*," *MÆ* 33 (1964), 36–46; I.C. Walker, "Chaucer and *Il Filostrato*," *ES* 49 (1968), 318–26; H.M. Cummings, *The Indebtedness of Chaucer's Works to the Italian Works of Boccaccio* (Cincinnati, 1916; rpt. New York: Phaeton Press, 1967); Karl Young, *The Origin and Development of the Story of Troilus and Criseyde* (London: Kegan Paul, 1908; rpt. New York, 1968).
- 33 In the Middle Ages, Chaucer's Lollius was erroneously thought to be a Latin *auctor* who wrote about the Trojan War, but he was an author without any known text. R.G. Latham and ten Brink were the first to suggest that Chaucer had probably accepted a medieval misreading of Horace's epistle (1.2.1–2) in which a certain Lollius, by means of a slight grammatical alteration (*scriptorem* > *scriptorum*), is taken to be the "greatest of authors of the Trojan War." See G.L. Kittredge, "Chaucer's Lollius," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 28 (1917), 47–133; Robert Pratt, "A Note on Chaucer's Lollius," *MLN* 65 (1950), 183–87.
- 34 See n. 17 above.
- 35 Throughout this discussion, I will refer to Lollius and Lollian matter without using quotation marks. However, when these names appear, I am actually speaking of the ground *matere* of *Troilus* as Chaucer has designed it, pretending that it belongs to Lollius.
- 36 Joseph of Exeter, *The Iliad of Dares Phrygius*, 4.
- 37 Even at the very beginning of his *Bellum Troianum*, Joseph promotes the theme of irony within the Trojan situation. He juxtaposes Troy's first destruction by the Greeks with Priam's poignantly innocent sense of triumph as he returns home from victory in east Phrygia. Unbeknown to Priam, Troy has been destroyed by the Greeks even as he has been winning a new territory

for himself. Victory and defeat co-exist, the glory of the former undercut by the simultaneous, unanticipated pain of the latter. This paradox – this example of joy and woe conjoined – Joseph depicts as a recurrent pattern in Troy's history. See Joseph of Exeter, *ibid.*, 13.

38 *Ibid.*, 80.

39 *Ibid.*, 81.

40 In his poem, Joseph develops an image of himself as one who strains in vain against the inevitable processes of Fate, Fortune, and human treachery working against Troy and its pride. From the very beginning he laments the foolish arrogance that drives the Trojans, and he wishes them a better understanding of their true situation. As an impotent, distanced observer, Joseph can do nothing to undo the processes leading the Trojans to destruction.

41 Mark Lambert writes very usefully about the “texture” of Trojan life in Chaucer's *Troilus*, though he arrives at conclusions different from my own. See “Telling the Story in *Troilus and Criseyde*,” in Piero Boitani and Jill Mann (eds.), *The Cambridge Chaucer Companion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 59–73, and “*Troilus*, Books I–III: a Criseydan Reading,” in Mary Salu (ed.), *Essays on Troilus and Criseyde* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1979), 105–25. Lambert views the Troy of Books I–III as “supremely the city of friendship” (*ibid.*, 110). It is not, he concludes, “truly of the great world, but remains innocent, sheltered, *seely*” (*ibid.*, 109–10). In my view, signs in *every* scene of life in Chaucer's Troy point to the lack of innocence even in the most apparently comfortable and intimate of situations. See also McCall, *Chaucer Among the Gods*, 93–104.

42 Chaucer's dreamer in the *House of Fame* (HF) utters this couplet as he laments Aeneas' betrayal of Dido and her misplaced trust in him. His exclamation refers to Aeneas, the Trojan in exile after the war, a prince whom Dido “demed . . . good, for he such semed.” The truth of Aeneas' defection inspires “routh” in Chaucer's teller. But his commentary might just as well serve to epitomize Lollius's *matere* of Troy in *Troilus and Criseyde*.

43 The suggestion that Chaucer's *Troilus* has as its deep subject mutability is not a new one. John Ganim and James Dean have both argued for the position I propose here, though to different effect. In an excellent essay, Dean demonstrates how “Chaucer alters the force and tenor of Boccaccio's rhetoric of closure to emphasize his own concern: the world's mutability rather than Criseyde's, or women's, ethical or spiritual culpabilities.” “In making these changes,” he suggests, “Chaucer, through his narrator, indicts the nature of things and sets his conclusion in a philosophical perspective” (“Chaucer's *Troilus*,” 175). While Dean attributes Chaucer's study of mutability to the narrator, I argue instead that the poem's texture – attributed to Lollius – provides the ground for the English poet's exploration of the world's essential instability. It is against the “truth” about mutability dramatized by Lollius' text that each of the characters in *Troilus*, including the narrating “I,” devises his or her own (ultimately inadequate or incomplete or impotent) defense. See also John Ganim, “Consciousness and Time in *Troilus and*

Criseyde," in his *Style and Consciousness in Middle English Narrative* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 79-102.

- 44 As Puttenham wrote of the *Troilus* meter, "His meetre Heroicall of *Troilus and Cresseid* is very graue and stately, keeping the staffe of seuē, and the verse of ten, his other verses of the Canterbury tales be but riding ryme" (quoted by Windeatt [ed.], *Troilus and Criseyde*, 55). Windeatt describes the effect of Chaucer's "meetre Heroicall" in the following way: "The *Troilus* metre, in the formal requirements it exacts from language, is a parallel example of the same taste for specialness, for an elevated conditioning of ordinary utterance in poetry" ("Most conservatyf the soun": Chaucer's *Troilus* Metre," *Poetica* [Tokyo] 8 [1977, 57]).
 - 45 On Chaucer's use of the Palladium, see also Christopher Baswell and Paul B. Taylor, "The *Faire Queene Eleyne* in Chaucer's *Troilus*," *Speculum* 63 (1988), 303-4.
 - 46 Several scholars in the last ten years have discussed Deiphebus' party in valuable and suggestive ways, calling attention both to the ironies in the scene and the apparent depiction of Troy as "the city of kindness and friendship . . . [and] unintimidating loving-kindness" (Lambert, "Telling the Story of *Troilus and Criseyde*," 61). John M. Fyler shows how in the "details of the Deiphebus . . . [episode], simple dramatic irony turns into a complex exploration of illusion and reality, and of the relationship between them" ("The Fabrications of Pandarus," *MLQ* 41 [1980], 119). Mark Lambert views the scene as an example of Chaucer's "astonishing mastery of atmosphere and texture" in which "Helen of Troy, in an astonishing transformation, becomes the very nicest lady in an affluent suburb" ("Telling the Story," 62); John Fleming examines Deiphebus' party and its preface as an episode of considerable quiet significance; for Deiphebus is deceived not by a woman, but by a man, and by a man whose greater goal is the greater deception of a woman. And the means of the deception is the obvious and manipulated abuse of brotherly love, Christian charity, the ideal at the heart of Chaucer's society and the concept meant to perfect the idea of love viewed as an historical development. ("Deiphebus Betrayed: Virgilian Decorum, Chaucerian Feminism," *ChauR* 21 [1986], 197-98).
- Each of these studies emphasizes, as I do, the very great subtlety of the scene and its labyrinthine ethical import. On Chaucer's Troy, see also Mark Lambert, "*Troilus*, Books I-III," 105-25. On Deiphebus, see McKay Sundwall, "Deiphobus and Helen: a Tantalizing Hint," *MP* 73 (1975), 151-56.
- 47 In his two essays about Chaucer's Troy, Mark Lambert argues that the city is genuinely "siker" - "the city of kindliness and friendship . . . a town of childhood" ("*Troilus*, Books I-III," 109). Though we as the audience may well be drawn to this impression, Chaucer's text pervasively undercuts such a reading by its introduction of subtle but significant signs of foreboding and treachery.
 - 48 The same epithet is used four times in this episode: II.1556, 1687, 1703, and 1714. See Baswell and Taylor, "The *Faire Queene Eleyne*," for an alternative

- reading of Helen's role in *Troilus*. Though I came upon this article after I had completed my chapter, it complements my own reading in useful ways.
- 49 What Bernard Silvester says of Virgil's *Aeneid* can also be said of the text Chaucer attributes to Lollius: "Since speech is sometimes true and sometimes false, the mixture of the truth of history and the falsity of fables in the narration follows this same pattern. The Greek destruction of Troy is history, but Aeneas's honesty is fiction, for Dares Phrygius narrates that Aeneas betrayed his city" (*Commentary on the First Six Books of Virgil's Aeneid*, trans. E.G. Schreiber and T.E. Maresca [Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1979], Book II, 16). Neither the *Aeneid* (nor the story of Troy as Cornelius Nepos and Benoît describe it) nor Lollius' text announces the admixture of falsity and fiction within the narrative. The task of discrimination in each case is left to the audience.
- 50 There are several valuable studies of Pandarus' role in *Troilus*. For my purposes, the most useful have been Fyler, "Fabrications," 115–30, and Carton, "Complicity and Responsibility." See also Thomas A. Van, "Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Explicator* 40 (1982), 8–10; Alan T. Gaylord, "Friendship in Chaucer's *Troilus*," *ChauR* 3 (1969), 239–64; Leah R. Freiwald, "Swych Love of Frendes: Pandarus and Troilus," *ChauR* 6 (1971), 120–29. On the relationship between Pandarus and the narrator, see Morton W. Bloomfield, "Distance and Predestination," 14–26; E. Talbot Donaldson, "Chaucer's Three 'P's': Pandarus, Pardoner, and Poet," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 14 (1975), 282–301; Zimbardo, "Creator and Created," 283–98.
- 51 Boece, Book III, Prose 2 in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 422. Chaucer, in his translation of Boethius, defines Epicurus' interests in terms that exactly parallel Pandarus': "Epicurus . . . juggid and establisseyde that delyt is the soverayn good, for as moche as alle othere thynges, as hym thoughte, byrefte away joye and myrthe from the herte" (*ibid.*). See also John of Wales, *Florilegium de vita et dictis illustrium philosophorum*, ed. Luke Wadding (Rome: Nicolaus Angelus Tinassius, 1655), VI, ch. 5, 355–61. I am grateful to Emerson Brown for information concerning the reception of Epicurus in fourteenth-century England.
- 52 This line occurs in a stanza that appears only in MSS *Phet.* (1.890–96). Barry Windeatt says of the stanza: "Its argument is something of an interpolation, and Ch may have intended to cancel it" (*Troilus and Criseyde*, 139). Whether or not this is so, the line shows Pandarus' interest in "translating" *aventure* into *grace* and, in the act, transforming Lollius' and the narrator's matter of Troy.
- 53 Chaucer uses the word "grace" in his translation of the *Roman de la rose* as he does in *Troilus* with a rich ambiguity, colored by religious overtones. But its central literal referent, for Pandarus as for *Amant*, is the lady's sexual favor.
- 54 It is important to observe that whenever Pandarus thinks of Criseyde's "grace" – her sexual gifts – he also thinks of "tyme" and "place." He is, as we see in Books II and III, preeminently concerned with the drama of erotic *moments* as these occur in specific places. I am indebted to Michael Uebel for calling my attention to the frequent rhyming in *Troilus* of "grace" and "space" or "place."

- 55 The word *aventure* appears eleven times in the *Knight's Tale* and thirty times in the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole. In *Troilus*, *aventure* is used eighteen times. Pandarus, Criseyde, and Troilus use the term eight times to describe the love affair in its various stages.
- 56 "Chance and Destiny in *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Knight's Tale*," in Jill Mann and Piero Boitani (eds.), *The Cambridge Chaucer Companion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 75–92.
- 57 See *Ars amatoria*, I, 399–404.
- 58 Criseyde will be in the "closet"; he will, he says, sleep outside the small room in "that outer hous," a space set apart by a curtain at the far end of the hall; and Criseyde's female entourage will be in the "myddel chambre" between the bedroom and the "outer hous" (III.662–70). We also learn that Pandarus' small bedroom has a "secre trappe-dore" (III.759), a device Criseyde discovers when Pandarus, leading Troilus, appears suddenly and "pryvely" in the room (III.741–59). Finally, there is, in the house, a "stewe" with a small window where Troilus waits for his opportunity to be with Criseyde (III.600–3). For a detailed discussion of Pandarus' house, see Hamilton Smyser, "The Domestic Background of *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Speculum* 31 (1956), 297–315.
- 59 Not only does Pandarus appropriate domestic architectural spaces for his fiction; he also uses rhetoric to alter the circumstances of small, confined places. He talks (and actually manipulates) Troilus and Criseyde into *his* bed in *his* (the artist's) bedroom so that they can enter into the seemingly uncircumscribed bliss of love-making.
- 60 On the comic aspect of Troilus as an inept lover, unfamiliar with the game of love, see Richard Firth Green, "Troilus and the Game of Love," *ChauR* 13 (1979), 201–20.
- 61 Robert Payne rightly identifies Book 1's *canticus* as the first moment in a "system of lyric and *apostrophe* . . . which provides the openings through which Chaucer may move outward from the action into a larger evaluation" (*The Key of Remembrance*, 184).
- 62 *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity*, 73.
- 63 For other discussions of the matter of Thebes in *Troilus*, see David Anderson, "Theban History in Chaucer's *Troilus*," *JAC* 4 (1982), 109–33; and Anderson, "Cassandra's Analogy: *Troilus* v.1450–1521," *Hebrew University Studies in Literature and the Arts* 13 (1985), 1–17; John P. McCall, "The Trojan Scene in Chaucer's *Troilus*," *ELH* 29 (1962), 263–75, and his *Chaucer Among the Gods*, 87ff.; Alain Renoir, "Thebes, Troy, Criseyde and Pandarus: an Instance of Chaucerian Irony," *Studia Neophilologica* 32 (1960), 14–17; Wetherbee, *Chaucer and the Poets*, ch. 4, "Thebes and Troy: Statius and Dante's Statius," 111–44; Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity*, 77.
- 64 Chaucer here replaces the private *loggia* where Boccaccio's Pandaro meets Criseida in the *Filostrato* with a public setting conventional in the French *romans antiques*, a book, and a group of ladies.
- 65 Boyd A. Wise argued that Chaucer knew the twelfth-century French *Roman de Thèbes* (*The Influence of Statius on Chaucer* [Baltimore: J.H. Furst, 1911], 127–37). See also Renoir, "Thebes, Troy." The most recent study of this

- subject is by Paul Clogan, "Criseyde's Book of the Romance of Thebes," *Hebrew University Studies in Literature and the Arts* 13 (1985), 18–28. Clogan argues that the *romance* of Thebes and the allusion to Statius' *Thebaid* in Book 11 of the *Troilus* contribute "to the development of the characters of Criseyde and Pandarus and provides an ominous background to the narrative" (19). My argument, while different, complements Clogan's.
- 66 The point at which the reading has stopped is the moment in the story of Thebes when Amphiorax, who has prophesied his own death, disappears forever, swallowed up by the earth. On the death of Amphiorax, see also *Thebaid*, 7.818.20; Dante, *Inferno*, 20.31–36; and Boccaccio, *Com. ninf.*, 21.14. Four of the five extant complete manuscripts of *Thèbes* have a decorated capital at the beginning of the episode in which Amphiorax dies. See A. Petit, *Naissances du roman: les techniques littéraires dans les romans antiques du XII^e siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1985), II, 1145.
- 67 On this point see Renoir's article, "Thebes, Troy," 14–17. Anderson argues that Chaucer's fourteenth-century audience would also have believed – on the basis of chroniclers' tabulations – that the misfortunes of Thebes preceded those of Troy by only a few years. For his detailed defense of this point, see his "Theban History."
- 68 The reference to Bishop Amphiorax ("arcevesque Amphiorex" [line 2300 in the *Roman de Thèbes*]) seems to have a special significance. Amphiorax, as a wise prophet, having foreseen his own death, a death destined by God, suddenly disappears into the ground (*Thèbes*, 4835–37). The Greeks, and particularly king Adrastus, recognize in the death their own loss of "conseil." Amphiorax has been a source of wisdom, and Adrastus argues "tempreement" that the bishop's death is a sign of God's displeasure with them. They must confess their sins and offer a sacrifice (5025–76). They must also elect a new bishop to take Amphiorax's place as their spiritual and political advisor. As is often the case in the *Roman de Thèbes*, the poet provides an audience in the poem to approve and thereby confirm the wisdom of the interpretation offered (5077–78). In effect, Amphiorax represents a prophetic wisdom which the Greeks recognize as essential to their wellbeing. When their bishop dies, they immediately seek to understand their loss and to provide themselves with a new source of *sapience* and *science*.
- 69 Boccaccio reports a domestic scene in which Cassandra confronts Troiolo with his love for Criseida. She has gotten her information from Deifobo who has overheard Troiolo. The confrontation affords Troiolo the opportunity to praise his lady even as he denies his love.
- 70 Most editors have omitted her Latin summary of Statius' *Thebaid*, relegating it to the textual notes, though it appears in all but two (H4R) manuscript copies of the poem. One scholar has recently labeled the summary a "digression of dubious relevance" (Waswo, "The Narrator," 19). Only recently has Barry Windeatt (rightly) returned the passage to its proper place in the text.
- 71 *Chaucer and the Poets*, 132.
- 72 See for example, *Roman de Troie*, lines 10444–46, 18711ff., 28610–15, 17545ff., 10175ff.

- 73 As Alastair Minnis has argued, “Cassandre and Troilus . . . provide the norms of virtue and knowledge against which we may measure the other characters” (*Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity*, 77). Their “pagan” visions of the same history, however, differ remarkably from each other and Chaucer seems to delight in dramatizing the differences.
- 74 For a useful discussion of this question, see Carton, “Complicity and Responsibility,” 47–61.
- 75 As Donaldson puts it: “It seems acceptable to say that Criseide is a very complex woman . . . Yet it might be better to say that Criseide’s character, if any, is a complex composite of emotional responses to her that the poem has evoked from the reader and continues to evoke after he has finished reading” (“Criseide and her Narrator,” in his *Speaking of Chaucer*, 82–83). On the character of Criseyde, see, besides Donaldson’s essay, Peter R. Schroeder, “Hidden Depths: Dialogue and Characterization in Chaucer and Malory,” *PMLA* 98 (1983), 374–87; A.C. Cawley, “A Note on Chaucer’s Prioress and Criseyde,” *MLR* 43 (1948), 74–77.
- 76 Donaldson, *Speaking of Chaucer*, 67.
- 77 *Ibid.*, 83.
- 78 For Burnley’s fine analysis of a crucial but difficult phrase, see “Criseyde’s Heart and the Weakness of Women: an Essay in Lexical Interpretation,” *Studia Neophilologica* 54 (1982), 25–38. Burnley quotes a passage from Albertus Magnus on the feature of joined eyebrows attributed to Criseyde by Chaucer in Book v (following Benoît) which bears importantly on Chaucer’s characterization of his heroine:

Et si sunt linearia, in longum ut linea vergentia, sunt signa humiditatis, quia humidum de facile omnem impressionem recepit, et per consequens sunt signa femineitatis et flexibilitatis.
(*Alberti Magni opera omnia*, vol. XII, *Quaestiones super de animalibus*, ed. Ephrem Filthaut, OP [Aschendorff, 1955], 1, Qu. 26; Burnley, “Criseyde’s Heart,” 38)

(And if they form a line, inclining towards [forming] a line for a long space, they are signs of moistness, because a moist [character] receives every impression easily, and as a result they are signs of femaleness and tractability.)
- It is Criseyde’s most salient quality that she is impressionable. Her sense of the world comes more from feeling than from reason.
- 79 In his *Allegory of Love*, C.S. Lewis stressed the importance of fear as the “ruling passion of his heroine” ([New York: Oxford University Press, 1936; 1958], 185). See also Alfred David, “Chaucerian Comedy and Criseyde,” in Mary Salu (ed.), *Essays on Troilus and Criseyde* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1979), 96; Edward J. Milowicki, “Characterization in *Troilus and Criseyde*: Some Relationships Centred on Hope,” *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 11 (1984), 15; Kate Bauer, “Criseyde’s Route.”
- 80 I am grateful to Giavanna Munafo for pointing out just how fully Boccaccio’s treatment of Criseida emphasizes the domination of the “male gaze” in the *Filostrato*.
- 81 It is interesting to notice that Chaucer’s precise word “meschaunce” translates Boccaccio’s vaguer “tanto male” (*Filos.*, I.II.I).
- 82 Windeatt (ed.), *Troilus and Criseyde*, 105.

- 83 For an alternative analysis of this sequence of scenes and one that arrives at conclusions different from my own see Donald R. Howard, "Experience, Language, and Consciousness: *Troilus and Criseyde*, 11, 596–931," in *Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies: Essays in Honor of Francis Lee Utley* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1978), 173–92. Howard argues that Criseyde's thought-processes as Chaucer dramatizes them are universal and that the poet causes us to share them in this episode. "We get not a clear overview of her conduct but the muddled sense we might have of such a choice if it had been our own" (191). While Howard rightly shows how Chaucer draws us into Criseyde's consciousness, he does not observe that hers is not the only way of responding to problems of interpretation and choice in the poem. See also A.C. Spearing, who, in his monograph on *Troilus*, emphasizes Chaucer's realization of "Criseyde's own consciousness" in the same episode (*Chaucer: Troilus and Criseyde*, 49).
- 84 I have drawn these views from the passage in Albertus Magnus' *Quaestiones super de animalibus* to which I referred in n. 78 above. Like Albertus, Chaucer gives us a woman who is receptive to every impression and "sliding" in her thought as she responds to them.
- 85 In important respects, Criseyde's soliloquy mirrors Helen's vacillating letter to Paris, as she commits her words "to the voiceless page." Helen argues first against loving Paris – recalling the importance of her honor. But then, flattered by the Judgment story and the praise of her beauty, she begins to yield, making arguments on the other side of the case. She also confesses to fears, confusion, and doubts not unlike Criseyde's, and it seems to me probable that Chaucer was studying both *Heroides* xvii and Benoît's heroines in the *Roman de Troie* as he translated Boccaccio's Criseida into his Criseyde. See, for example, *Her.* xvii, 147–50: "My very fear is a burden, I am in confusion even now, and think that the eyes of all are on my face. Nor do I think so groundlessly; I have caught the evil murmurs of the crowd, and Aethra has brought back certain words to me."
- 86 On Chaucer's description of Criseyde's garden, see F. Crisp, *Medieval Gardens* (London: John Lane, 1924), ch. 11; Derek Pearsall (ed.), *The Floure and the Leafe* (London: Nelson, 1962), 50–51, and note.
- 87 I am grateful to Clare Kinney for calling my attention to the importance of "feminine" lyric song in *Troilus* ("Who made this song?": the Engendering of Lyric Counterplots in *Troilus and Criseyde*," forthcoming in *Studies in Philology*).
- 88 Barry Windeatt ([ed.], *Troilus and Criseyde*, 193) notes a consonance between these lines and Guillaume de Machaut's *balade* in *La Louange des dames* by Guillaume de Machaut, ed. N. Wilkins (Edinburgh, 1972), 78.
- 89 In the parallel stanza in the *Filostrato* (vi.31), Boccaccio had also focused on choosing the right time for love. But Boccaccio's stanza is narrowly tied to Ovid's *Ars amatoria* 1, 399–404, and especially 403–4 ("Nec teneras semper tutum captare puellas:/ Saepe dato melius tempore fiet idem"). Chaucer, by contrast, attends closely to Criseyde's habit of hesitation "bitwixen tweye" and her tendency to change her mind suddenly under the pressure of changing circumstances.
- 90 In an important article, E. Talbot Donaldson called attention to the

discontinuities that characterize the concluding section of *Troilus*. He saw in them symptoms of a "kind of nervous breakdown" which he attributed not to Chaucer but to his simple, naive narrator ("The Ending of 'Troilus,'" in his *Speaking of Chaucer*, 91). Elizabeth Salter, while agreeing with Donaldson's assessment of the "inconsistencies" and "oddities" in the poem's ending, blames the contradictions on Chaucer the poet and the "deeper troubles" he encountered "as he wrought decisive changes in his source" ("*Troilus and Criseyde*: Poet and Narrator," 281 and 288). By contrast, I argue that Chaucer provided his *Troilus* with two formally contrasted endings as a way of exploring the history of authorship from the classical *auctores* to the Christian *poetae*, and from both of these to the holy Trinity as the author of unending life.

- 91 To be sure, Pandarus shapes a "good aventure," wresting moments of bliss from the matter of Troy, but to do so he must falsify the matter. He invents lies and illusions in order to evade its actual pressure and its woes.
- 92 I am not the first to emphasize the lyric quality of the concluding movement of *Troilus*. James Dean goes beyond E.T. Donaldson in pointing out that "the *Troilus* at closure modulates into something like lyric in several ways" ("Chaucer's *Troilus*," 181). Dean, however, does not consider the possibility that Chaucer is here deliberately juxtaposing "pagan" narrative and Christian lyric to contrast two different phases in the history of human salvation (and the literature responding to that history).
- 93 For this attitude, see also 2.19-21 and 3.1408-10.
- 94 On Chaucer's use of rhyme royal in relation to the subject of Christian transcendence, see my essay, "Chaucer's Tales of Transcendence: Rhyme Royal and Christian Prayer in the *Canterbury Tales*," in C. David Benson and Elizabeth Robertson (eds.), *Chaucer's Religious Tales* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990), 21-38.

7 THE CONSOLATION OF STOIC VIRTUE: CHAUCER'S *KNIGHT'S TALE* AND THE TRADITION OF THE *ROMAN ANTIQUE*

- 1 For discussion of the tale's date of composition, see F.N. Robinson (ed.), *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd edn. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), 669-70. As Robinson concludes, "It is natural to suppose that Chaucer had in hand the two great Italian poems at about the same time. But no decisive evidence has yet been found in the works themselves to show which was the earlier." It seems very likely, as Robinson and others have argued, that Chaucer first encountered both the *Filostrato* and the *Teseida* on one of his trips to Italy in the 1370s. He may have acquired copies of both poems as well as some of Petrarch's poetry during his visit to Italy in the late winter and early spring of 1372-73. On this question, see Piero Boitani, *Chaucer and Boccaccio* (Oxford: Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 1977); L.D. Benson (ed.), *The Riverside Chaucer* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Press, 1987), xix; Howard Schless, "Transformations: Chaucer's Use of Italian," in D.S. Brewer (ed.), *Geoffrey Chaucer* (London: G. Bell, 1974), 184-223.

From the time of Robert Pratt's seminal article, there has been much discussion as to whether Chaucer's copy of the *Teseida* contained Boccaccio's marginal glosses. Most recently, William Coleman has argued that "Chaucer's copy of *Il Teseida* had neither the short, the medium, nor the long version of Boccaccio's commentary" (*Chaucer Newsletter*, 9 [1987], 6). See also Pratt, "Chaucer's Use of the *Teseida*," *PMLA* 62 (1947), 598-621. Whether or not Chaucer's copy contained the glosses, it almost certainly showed the Italian poet's deep concern for formal shaping, evident in his division of the poem into twelve books, and, within these, into parts, his elaborate invocations, and his prefatory sonnets.

- 2 On manuscript evidence for the title "Tales of the Book of Caunterbury" see Robert A. Pratt, "Chaucer's Title: The tales of Caunterbury," *PQ* 54 (1975), 19-25.
- 3 The only manuscripts that provide explicit subdivisions for the *Knight's Tale* are Ellesmere and Hengwrt. El. divides the poem into four parts, Hg. into three. The rubrics expressing the divisions may be scribal rather than authorial, but the Knight-teller's elaborate interventions argue for Chaucer's own concern with formal structuring in the *Tale*. On the rubrics and divisions of the *Knight's Tale*, see N.F. Blake, *The Textual Tradition of the Canterbury Tales* (London: Arnold, 1985), 143.
- 4 We know from the evidence of the *Parlement of Foules* and the *Legend of Good Women* that Chaucer had used the *Teseida* as a basis for translation well before the Canterbury period. As he lists his works in the prologue to the *Legend*, he mentions his "endytyng" of "al the love of Palamon and Arcite/ Of Thebes, thogh the storye ys knowen lyte" (F, 420-21). Moreover, in his early *Parlement*, he straightforwardly translates the *Teseida's* description of Venus' temple, and he uses not only the *Filostrato* but also the *Teseida* in his *Troilus*. There has been much speculation over the years as to whether Chaucer had made a prior translation of the *Teseida*, perhaps in rhyme royal, upon which he then based his version for the *Canterbury Tales*. Whatever the case, the *Knight's Tale* as we have it is far more different from the *Teseida* than *Troilus* is from the *Filostrato*. For discussion and bibliography concerning an ur-text of the *Knight's Tale*, see Robinson (ed.), *Works*, 669.
- 5 On the date of *Anelida and Arcite*, see Vincent J. Di Marco's notes in the *Riverside Chaucer*, 991.
- 6 In thus combining an historical frame with a Heroidian letter of complaint, Chaucer follows exactly the pattern of the medieval commentaries on Ovid. In most *Heroides* manuscripts from the twelfth century on, the epistles are preceded by a summary of the historical situations that caused the bereft heroines to write to their lovers. Chaucer also seems, in *Anelida*, to be responding appreciatively to Boccaccio's similar graftings of history and complaint in both the *Filostrato* and the *Teseida*. On Chaucer's use of the *Heroides* as his model, see Edgar F. Shannon, *Chaucer and the Roman Poets* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1929; rpt. 1964), 28-44.
- 7 That Chaucer's "Corynne" is Ovid seems to me indisputable, and I hope to make a persuasive case on this subject in a forthcoming article. For a valuable first stage in the argument, see Shannon, *Roman Poets*, 21-28.

- 8 For other parallels and changes, see David Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale: Imitation of Classical Epic in Boccaccio's Teseida* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 38–96 and 200–19.
- 9 We cannot be certain whether Chaucer or a scribe placed the lines from the *Thebaid* as an epigraph for the *Knight's Tale*. The Latin quotation appears in several manuscripts, including Hengwrt and Ellesmere, and it seems to me probable that Chaucer was responsible for making the explicit connection between his classicizing romance and its canonical Latin forebear. Chaucer's direct indebtedness to Statius' *Thebaid* has long been recognized. See Boyd A. Wise, *The Influence of Statius upon Chaucer* (Baltimore: J.H. Furst, 1911); Shannon, *Roman Poets* 329–32; Haller, "The *Knight's Tale* and the Epic Tradition," *ChauR* 1 (1966), 67–84; Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale*, 192–224; Paul Olson, "Chaucer's Epic Statement and the Political Milieu of the Late Fourteenth Century," *Mediaevalia* 5 (1979), 61–65, and *The Canterbury Tales and the Good Society*, 49–71. Paul Clogon argues that Chaucer knew and used not only the *Thebaid* but also medieval scholia drawn from the margins of one or more glossed MSS. of Statius ("Chaucer and the *Thebaid* Scholia," *Studies in Philology* 61 [1964], 599–615).
- 10 Theseus, triumphant entry into Athens, sharply undercut by his encounter with the Argive women, underscores a dominant theme of *Thebaid* XII: "et saevi meminit victoria belli" (victory is still mindful of savage war) (XII, 8).
- 11 *Fourteenth-Century English Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 180.
- 12 *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 181.
- 13 Muscatine (*ibid.*, 181):

What gives this conception of life its perspective, its depth and seriousness, is its constant awareness of a formidably antagonistic element – chaos, disorder – which in life is an ever-threatening possibility, even in the moments of supremest assuredness, and which in the poem falls across the pattern of order, being clearly exemplified in the erratic reversals of the poem's plot, and deeply embedded in the poem's texture.
- 14 On the subject of *aventure* and *merveilles* in Benoît's *Roman de Troie* and other medieval romances, see M. Wilmotte, "Observations sur le *Roman de Troie*," *MA* 27 (1914), 116–17; Morton W. Bloomfield, "Episodic Motivation and Marvels in Epic and Romance," in his *Essays and Explorations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), 97–128; W.T.H. Jackson, "The Nature of Romance," *YFS* 51 (1974) 12–25. As Jackson observes, "it is often not realized how radical a departure from earlier narrative poetry the 'adventure' is" (17).
- 15 Chaucer, following Benoît de Sainte-Maure and the anonymous authors of the other two twelfth-century *romans antiques*, takes advantage of the strictly *secular* form of classicizing romance to raise problematic philosophical questions about life in the world. The non-Christian environment of pagan story allows for play with moral questions without recourse to "higher" theological explanations. It is noteworthy that the thirteenth-century authors of the Vulgate Cycle of Arthurian romance take great pains to include precisely this latter kind of "higher" exegesis in their narratives. Hermits appear at every turn to explain the Christian moral and spiritual implications

of knightly adventures. It is tempting to think that the prose writers of the Vulgate Cycle were reacting against the dangerously mimetic art of twelfth-century secular verse-narratives like the *romans antiques* by *allegorizing* their fictions in the direction of Christian, eschatological interpretations of legendary matter.

- 16 Winthrop Wetherbee, calling attention to this scene for purposes different from my own, rightly says of it: "The effect is to make this episode a sort of icon of knightly responsibility" ("Romance and Epic in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*," *Exemplaria* 2[1990], 317).
- 17 *Chaucer's Language and the Philosophers' Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).
- 18 *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity* (Cambridge and Totowa, N.J.: Rowan and Littlefield, 1982), 121.
- 19 One thirteenth-century moralist summarizes the difference between the three Christian theological virtues and the Stoic "human" virtues in a way that illuminates the appearance of the latter (and the absence of the former) in the *Knight's Tale*:

Omnis uirtus perfectio est anime rationali secundum uires. Sed duplex est perfectio: perfectio secundum partem superiorem rationis, et perfectio quantum ad inferiorem. Illa que est secundum superiorem partem rationis fit per tres uirtutes theologicas: anima enim secundum superiorem partem tantum est ymago Dei, scilicet unitatis et trinitatis . . . Perfectio autem anime rationalis quantum ad partem inferiorem que non est ymago Dei, non fit secundum hunc numerum uirtutum, sed secundum numerum consequentem, scilicet secundum quaternarium, quia secundum tres uirtutes theologicas anima ordinatur ad eterna contemplanda, secundum quatuor uirtutes cardinales et humanas dirigitur ad temporalia et corporalia disponenda.

(Chancelier Philippe, *Summa de bono*, ed. Dom Odon Lottin, *Psychologie et morale aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles* [Gembloux, Belgium: Duculot, 1949], vol. III, 181.

Every virtue is the perfection of the rational spirit according to its power. But the perfection is twofold: perfection according to the inferior. That which is according to the superior part of reason operates through the three theological virtues: for the spirit according to the superior part is the image of God, namely of unity and trinity . . . But the perfection of the rational spirit as far as the inferior part, which is not the image of God, does not operate according to this number of virtues, but according to the following number, namely according to four, because according to the three theological virtues the soul is ordered toward contemplating eternal things; according to the four cardinal and human virtues, it is directed toward ordering temporal and bodily things.)

This formulation also appears in Jean de la Rochelle's *De virtutibus* [see Lottin (ed.), VI, 183-94].)

- 20 "Motivation and Marvels," 106.
- 21 It is significant that the word "aventure" does not appear even once in the *Squire's Tale*. The Squire embarks on a narrative that aims to be a romance but, unlike his father, the Knight, he never discovers the most basic secrets of serious, morally efficacious storytelling. It is also noteworthy that in the *Franklin's Tale* as a Breton *lai* the word *aventure* appears with the second greatest frequency in the *Tales* (four times). As we would expect, *aventure* appears more often in *Troilus* than in any other Chaucerian work except for the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole (eighteen times).
- 22 "Chance and Destiny in *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Knight's Tale*," in Piero

Boitani and Jill Mann (eds.), *The Cambridge Chaucer Companion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 87–92. Though my own thinking on the subject of *aventure* in the *Knight's Tale* developed independently of Mann's work, it coincides with hers in important respects. As she argues:

we must . . . give due attention to [Chaucer's] presentation of *event*, rather than focussing on the 'characters' of . . . Palamon and Arcite, as sole determinants of the narrative development. We must be alive to his use of words like 'cas', 'aventure' or 'destinee' . . . as signalling his reflections on the nature of the forces which work on human beings, and the extent of their own possibilities for action. (90–91)

- 23 *Ad Marciam de consolatione*, vol. II of *Moral Essays*, ed. and trans. John W. Basore (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press and Heinemann, 1965), 30–32.
- 24 Here Boccaccio gives us the well-known Boethian distinction between "destiny" (the order of things perceived from below) and "providence" (the same order as God perceives it).
- 25 Vittore Branca (ed.), *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vol. II (Verona: Mondadori, 1967), 542.
- 26 In the first instance (line 1788), Theseus uses the word "myracles" to describe the God of Love's power over the human heart, his power to elicit foolish behavior. The word appears twelve times in the whole course of the *Canterbury Tales*, but five times in Chaucer's translation of Boethius. All of the word's occurrences in the *Consolation* are in Book IV, Prose 6, where Lady Philosophy explains to her pupil the nature of destiny, chance, and miracles.
- 27 *Boece*, IV, pr. 6, 6–8; *Riverside Chaucer*, 450.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 17–20; *RC*, 450–51.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 25–29; *RC* 451, and 199–202; *RC*, 452. As Lady Philosophy points out, these questions not only trouble Boethius but also "men [in general] [who] weren wont to maken questiouns" of these issues. In Chaucer's argument, his pagan characters represent these "men in general" but they do not have the assurances of an allegorized Philosophy to lead them from their questions to truth.
- 30 In Boccaccio, after Arcita has been injured, the whole court, including Teseo, immediately surrounds Arcita, deeply concerned for his welfare. By contrast, Chaucer removes Theseus from the scene, "al be it," as the narrator says, "that this *aventure* was falle."
- 31 The other two instances give to Providence the same supreme power of directing human affairs even though humans generally fail to perceive or understand the benevolent workings of this power. In the first case, Arcite questions the capacity of human beings to know what they should seek or ask for. And he assumes that the "purveiaunce of God" "yeveth hem ful ofte in many a gyse/ Wel bettre than they kan hemself devyse" (1.1252–54). In the second case, Theseus, in his "First Mover" speech, explains that the "Firste Moevere . . . of his wise purveiaunce, . . . hath so wel biset his ordinance/ That spesce of thynges and progressiouns/ Shullen endure by successiouns,/ And nat eterne" (2987, 3011–15). These brief mentions of providence do not counterbalance our much fuller experience in the fiction of *aventure*, but they do hover in a shadowy way over the darkened scene of the tale.

- 32 For a complementary discussion of Chaucer's structuring of this part of the *Knight's Tale*, see Robert M. Jordan, *Chaucer and the Shape of Creation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 169–72. As Jordan rightly points out:

The intervention of Theseus culminates the first half of the tale. In establishing the conditions for the tourney Theseus raises the action to the high plateau of spectacle which constitutes Parts Three and Four of the tale. Here attention is concentrated almost without variation on the single focal point of the arena. Consequently the kind of abrupt movement between spatially separated segments of action is not a conspicuous element of the second half of the tale. (171)

- 33 On Saturn's role in the *Knight's Tale*, see Alan T. Gaylord, "The Role of Saturn in the *Knight's Tale*," *ChauR* 8 (1974), 172–90.
- 34 *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), 118.
- 35 *Chaucer and Boccaccio*, 143. Some scholars, however, have argued that Theseus is as cruel as he is virtuous. See, for example, Henry J. Webb, "A Reinterpretation of Chaucer's Theseus," *The Review of English Studies* 23 (1947), 289–96; David Aers, *Chaucer, Langland and the Creative Imagination* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980); Terry Jones, *Chaucer's Knight: the Portrait of a Medieval Mercenary* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980).
- 36 *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity*, 121.
- 37 *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 46.
- 38 Friar Lorens, a French Dominican, wrote his *Somme le roi* for King Philip III in 1279. His "compilation" enjoyed great popularity in the late Middle Ages and was translated into English in nine different versions, including Dan Michel's *Ayenbite of Inwit* and the anonymous fourteenth-century *Book of Virtues and Vices*. It was also printed by Caxton as the *Royal Book* about 1486. For a full discussion of the text's history, see W. Nelson Francis (ed.), *The Book of Virtues and Vices* (Early English Text Society, o.s. 217) (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), ix–xlv.
- 39 *Somme le Roi*, ed. Brayer, vol. IV, 53–54:

Per ses.III. vertuz, fet il [Plotins], est li homs dignes que il soit gouvernerres primes de soi, et après d'autrui. En ces.III.vertuz s'estudient li anciain phylosophe qui tout le monde despisoient et guarpisoient pour vertu aquerre et sapience, et por ce estoient il apelé phylosophe, car phylosophe vaut autant comme amour de sapience.

Hee Diex! comme nous devroit confondre ce que cil qui estoient paien et senz loi escrite, qui riens ne savoient de la veraie grace Dieu ne du saint Esperit, et nequedent il montoient en la monteigne de perfeccion de vie a force par leur propre vertu, et ne daignoient neis le monde regarder.

Et nous qui sommes crestien et avons la veraie foi, et savons les commendemenz Dieu, et avons la grace dou S. Esperiz, se nous volons, qui plus peüssions en .I. jor profiter que cil ne peüssent en .I. an antier, nous vivons com pourceaus ci aval en ces boes de cest monde, et peschons es rainnes aveques les avetes es paluz des deliz du monde. Pour ce dit sainz Pous que li paien qui sont senz loi et font la loi au jour dou Jugement nous jugeront, qui avrons la loi et point n'en fesons.

- 40 The study of Theseus as a model of the humanly just man also provides a foil for the Parson's examination of Christian penance in the last of the *Tales*. Penance is an act which, as the *Summa virtutum*, Chaucer's likely source for the *Parson's Tale*, declares, is a part of justice: "'Iusticiam' dicimus penitenciam, quia species est iusticie et iuste debetur pro peccatis" (We call penance "justice" because it is a species of justice and is owed justly for our sins) (IV.1150-55) (Siegfried Wenzel [ed.], *Summa virtutum de remediis anime* [Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984], 214-15). If the first tale in the collection examines the power human, Ciceronian justice has to combat the destructive motions of *aventure*, *cas*, and illicit passion, the last offers the possibility of another form of justice, one capable of readying the soul for eternal bliss. Both the Knight's and the Parson's forms of justice, significantly enough, require contempt of the world and the gifts of Fortune, though with different ends in view.
- 41 This treatise, which had very wide currency in the later Middle Ages and generally appeared among Seneca's works, was actually written by Martin of Braga in the sixth century under the title, *Formula honestae vitae* (PL 72, 21-28).
- 42 PL 178, 1651-58.
- 43 *De virtutibus et de vitiis et de donis spiritus sancti*, ed. Dom O. Lottin, in *Psychologie et morale aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles*, vol. VI (Gembloux, Belgium: Duculot, 1960), 45-92.
- 44 Ed. John Holmberg (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1929). Holmberg attributed this very important and influential treatise to William of Conches. More recently, R.-A. Gauthier has argued for Walter of Chatillon as its author. See his article, "Pour l'Attribution à Gauthier de Chatillon du *Moralium dogma philosophorum*," *Revue du Moyen Age latin* 7 (1951), 19-64.
- 45 *Guillelmi Peraldi . . . summae virtutum ac vitiorum tomus primus* (Lyons: Pierre Compagnon et Robert Taillandier, 1668).
- 46 "La 'Somme le Roi' de Frère Laurent," ed. E. Brayer, 4 vols., unpublished thesis, L'Ecole des Chartes, Paris, 1940.
- 47 Ed. Francis J. Carmody (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1948). Brunetto gives both the Aristotelian and the Stoic systems of virtue in his *Tresor*.
- 48 There was considerable discussion among medieval moralists as to whether one should speak of three or four principal virtues conducing to the good moral life. The author of the *Ysagoge* gives a useful summary of the debate:

Virtutem alii quadrifariam dividunt, alii in tres partes. Tullius enim in libro *Officiorum* et in *Rethorica* sua, necnon Macrobius in *Commento super sompniurn Scipionis*, et alii quam plures annumerantes prudentiam virtutibus, virtutem dividunt in iusticiam, prudentiam, fortitudinem, temperantiam. Hoc autem est Socraticum dogma. Socrates enim large accipiens virtutem secundum illam diffinitionem, quam secundam posuimus et que omnes rationabiles habitus colligit, scientias sub virtute ponit. Nos autem scientias separantes a virtutibus, virtutis nomen stricte accipimus secundum primam descriptionem. In quo Aristotilem sequimur, qui non putat prudentiam virtutem esse, quia neque inest bonis et malis nec in ea meritum ullum.

(*Écrits théologiques de l'école d'Abélard*, ed. Arthur Landgraf [Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1934], 74)

(Some divide virtue into four, others into three parts. For Tullius in his book of *Duties* and in his *Rhetoric* and also Macrobius in his *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, and many others, counting Prudence among the virtues, divide virtue into Justice, Prudence, Fortitude, and Temperance. This, however, is the teaching of Socrates. For Socrates, treating virtue expansively according to that definition, which we have placed second, places knowledge under virtue, whose nature binds together all rational beings. Without separating knowledge from the virtues, however, we understand the name of virtue strictly according to the first description. In this we follow Aristotle, who does not think that Prudence is a virtue because there is neither good nor evil in it, nor any merit.)

- 49 “[S]ocietas hominum inter ipsos et vitae quasi communitas continetur” (I, vii).
- 50 “Justicia est uirtus conseruatrix humane societatis et uite communitatis” (*Das Moralium Dogma Philosophorum des Guillaume de Conches*, ed. John Holmberg [Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1929], 12).
- 51 *Ibid.*, 12: “Hec uirtus etiam omnia aspera transcendit. Nemo enim iustus esse potest qui mortem, qui exilium, qui dolorem, qui egestatem timet, aut qui ea que sunt his contraria equitati anteponit.”
- 52 *Ibid.*, 12–13. See also Brunetto Latini, *Li Livre dou tresors*, 274. Brunetto’s translation of *liberalitas* as *cortoisie* has an interesting bearing on the “curteisie” loved by Chaucer’s Knight.
- 53 *Moralium*, 26: “Reuerentia est uirtus personis grauibus uel aliqua prelatione sublimatis debite honorificationis cultum exhibens . . . Optimum est enim maiorum uestigia sequi, si recta precedunt. Eligendus est autem nobis uir bonus et semper ante oculos habendus, ut sic tamquam illo spectante uiuamus et omnia tamquam illo uidente faciamus” (Reverence is the virtue showing respect to noble persons or some prelate by means of lofty honors, whose duty it is to imitate those who are greater [than oneself]. However, a good man must be chosen by us, and he must always be kept before our eyes, so that it is just as if we were living in his sight and doing everything as if we were seen by him).
- 54 *Ysagoge*, 76; *Moralium*, 27.
- 55 *Moralium*, 13: “Tercium seueritatis officium est exterminare ex hominum communitate pestiferum genus hominum” (The third duty of sternness is to remove the pestiferous sort of men from the community of men).
- 56 *De officiis*, ed. and trans. Walter Miller (Loeb Classical Library) (London and New York: Heinemann and Macmillan, 1913, 24–25): “Fundamentum . . . est iustitiae fides, id est dictorum conventorumque constantia et veritas. Ex quo, . . . tamen audeamus imitari Stoicos . . . credamusque, quia fiat, quod dictum est, appellatam fidem.” The translation is Miller’s.
- 57 *Dialogus*, PL 178, 1655. Medieval moralists were also quick to point out that promises ought not to be kept in certain circumstances. If, for example, they bring more harm to the one promising than good to the recipient of the vow, promises should not be honored. This is clearly a caveat of significant use in interpreting the Franklin’s study of “trouth.” See, for instance, Peter Abelard, *Dialogus*, PL 178, 1655; and *Moralium*, 24.
- 58 *Moralium*, 24.
- 59 I draw the phrase “vinculum societatis humanae” from one of the most important documents on Stoic virtue during the Middle Ages, Martin of

- Braga's *Formula honestae vitae* (PL 72, 27). Martin writes of justice: "Justitia non nostra constitutio, sed divina lex est, vinculum societatis humanae."
- 60 *Moralium*, 130: Compassion is a virtue which makes the heart tender and compassionate towards those who are oppressed by discomfort . . . And whoever is compassionate and full of pity towards those who are distressed is mindful of himself.
- 61 *Ibid.*
- 62 *Ibid.*, 27.
- 63 The distinction is one Seneca makes in his treatise, *De clementia*, between *clementia* and *misericordia*. It does appear in medieval treatises, though not very often. Seneca calls *misericordia* an "unhealthy impression produced by the sight of others' unmerited miseries." "The wise man," he continues, "is not subject to any moral infirmity; his spirit is serene and no event in the world is capable of making it gloomy. Grief breaks the soul, defeats it, contracts it." Later, Seneca points out that "grief does not know well how to discern the truth, to imagine useful measures, to avoid dangers, to appreciate sorrows in an equitable way" (*De clementia*, II, iii–iv, 12).
- 64 Seneca, *De la clémence* [*De clementia*], ed. and trans. François Préchac (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1921), II, iv, 12.
- 65 For the various suggestions that have been offered, see *The Riverside Chaucer*, 840, n. 2847–49.
- 66 Kolve, *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative*, 146–47.
- 67 For a useful discussion of Chaucer's rigorous development of "pagan antiquity" and "pagan philosophy," see ch. 2 of *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry*, 15–58.
- 68 Alastair Minnis has likewise argued (I think rightly) for Chaucer's effort to draw a sympathetic "pagan" view of the world in the *Knight's Tale*, though without examining the poet's full and precise debt to the moral program of the Middle Stoics. See *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity*, esp. 108–43.
- 69 Epistle 107, 224–25.
- 70 *De remediis fortuitorum liber*, in *L. Annaei Senecae Opera*, ed. Fridericus Haase, vol. III, 447.
- 71 *Moralium*, 33.
- 72 In some treatises, this essentially Senecan theme is repeated as a prelude to Christian teaching about eternal life. So for example, in an English fourteenth-century translation of Friar Lorens's *Somme le roi*, the author links the attitudes of the *De remediis* to advice about looking towards "þat oper lif":

And he may be wel riȝtfully cleped a wrecche þa[t] can nouȝt lyue ne dar not dye. ȝif þu wolte lyue frely, lerne to dye gladly. And ȝif þou askest how schal a man lerne, we schulle teche þe al swyþe. Þe bihoueþ to wite þat þis lif nys but deþ. For deþ is a passage, þat wot euery man, and þerfore men seiþ whan a man is ded he is passed. Þis lif is but a passynge tyme. ȝe, and þat a litle, for al þe lif of a man, þouȝ he myȝt lyue a þousand ȝer, nys but a turnyng of a mannes hond as to þat oper lif, þat euer lasteþ wiþ-outen ende, or in ioie wiþ-outen ende, or in sorwe and payne.

(*The Book of Virtues and Vices*, ed. Francis, 68)

- It is significant that Chaucer draws from a *secular* poetic tradition in his *Knight's Tale*, explicitly avoiding any mention of Christian belief or a Christian transformation of Stoic ideas.
- 73 It is worth noting that in Boccaccio's *Teseida* none of the courtiers pays any attention to the wise Egeus. By contrast, Chaucer not only gives him a speech but also shows that the speech effects a change in Theseus.
 - 74 Only later will we learn that Theseus struggles to practice virtue, that he must overcome anger in himself, that as a young man he had fallen into foolish love. As Winthrop Wetherbee observes of Arcite's death and Theseus' funeral arrangements: "within the economy of the *Knight's Tale*, Arcite's death constitutes undeniable evidence of the power of accident to confound Theseus's attempts to preserve order, and his funeral is the necessary formal acknowledgement of this intrusion" ("Romance and Epic," 323).
 - 75 *Ysagoge in theologiam*, in Arthur Landgraf, *Écrits théologiques de l'école d'Abélard* (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1934), 75.
 - 76 Peter Abelard, *Dialogus*, PL 178, 1654.
 - 77 *Medieval to Renaissance in Medieval Poetry*, 47.
 - 78 *Chaucer and the Shape of Creation*, 179. *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative*, 135.
 - 79 I am indebted to Mary Jane Doherty for pointing out to me the importance of Daedalus' portals as an example of "pagan" art.
 - 80 *P. Vergili Maronis opera*, ed. R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969; rpt. with corrections, 1972), 228.
 - 81 *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative*, 134. Kolve rightly goes on to emphasize the similarity between Theseus and the Knight, though without observing the specifically Stoic philosophical position that links the two characters. The Knight's voice, he writes, "is grave, mature, and dignified, with as deep a stake in the philosophical questions posed by the poem's action as in the narrative outcome of the actions themselves. It sounds most like the voice of Theseus." For a very different reading of the Knight-teller's relationship to his narrative, see Winthrop Wetherbee, "Romance and Epic." Wetherbee says of the Knight that he "has a powerful professional investment in the optimistic, 'romance' version of his story, and [his] suppression of historical and psychological reality, though largely unwitting, is also to a certain extent a deliberate, political gesture" (305).
 - 82 For readings of the speech different from my own, see P.M. Kean, *Chaucer and the Making of English Poetry*, vol. 11 (London and Boston, Mass.: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), 41–48; and Salter, *Fourteenth-Century English Poetry*, 178–80. Those whose positions parallel my own in various ways include Robert Burlin, *Chaucerian Fictions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 104–11; Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity*; and Kolve, *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative*, 136–57. See also Dale Underwood, "The First of the *Canterbury Tales*," *ELH* 26 (1959), 455–69; Richard Neuse, "The Knight: the First Mover in Chaucer's Human Comedy," *UTQ* 31 (1962), 299–315; and A.C. Spearing (ed.), *The Knight's Tale* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).

- 83 For example, Theseus shares with Teseo materials that may have been drawn from Seneca's *Consolatio ad Marciam* as he lists the rocks being worn down and rivers drying up to illustrate the point that all of nature is subject to change and corruptibility. But then Theseus adds to the list "the grete tounes" that "wane and wende." In his *Consolatio*, Seneca, while also mentioning mountains being leveled and rivers and seas drying up or changing their course, likewise discusses the downfall of great cities (*Moral Essays*, II, 94–95). In this case, Chaucer may have been consulting Seneca directly or he may have used any one of a number of medieval florilegia for his Stoic themes. On the subject of Chaucer's sources for classical wisdom, see Robert Pratt, "Chaucer and the Hand that Fed Him," *Speculum* 41 (1966), 619–42; Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity*. I plan to treat the large question of Chaucer's Seneca in another study.
- 84 The word "corruptable" is a key word in Theseus' description of the mortal world. Until well beyond the Middle Ages "corruptible/corrupted" carried the precise meaning "decay of the flesh." Chaucer uses it twice in this sense to describe Arcite's dying body (A.2746 and 2754).
- 85 Boece, Book III, Prose 10 in *Riverside Chaucer*, 432.
- 86 *Riverside Chaucer*, 464.

EPILOGUE

- 1 Lydgate's *Troy Book*, ed. Henry Bergen (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1906), 3. For the date of the *Troy Book*, see ix. See also C. David Benson, *The History of Troy in Middle English Literature: Guido delle Colonne's Historia destructionis Troiae in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Brewer, 1980).
- 2 There are also two other fifteenth-century English translations of Guido, the alliterative *Destruction of Troy* and *The Laud Troy Book*. In addition, there is a Scots translation of the *Historia*, once attributed to Barbour, now extant only in fragments. Lydgate's source for the *Siege* is some late French prose version of the *Roman de Thèbes*, which still remains to be identified. He also had recourse to Boccaccio's *Genealogiae deorum*, the Bible, Martianus Capella, and Seneca or some compendium of Senecan thought. See Axel Erdmann and Eilert Ekwall, *Lydgate's Siege of Thebes*, vol. II (EETS, o.s. cxxv [1930], Kraus rpt. 1981), 6–8. Lydgate designed his *Siege* to be the first tale on the homeward journey of Chaucer's pilgrims from Canterbury to the Tabard. As such, it parallels the *Knigh's Tale*, the first tale on the outward journey, and was no doubt intended to compete with it.
- 3 On Henryson's dates, see Denton Fox (ed.), *The Poetry of Robert Henryson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), xiii–xxii. William Thynne printed an anglicized version of the *Testament* in his 1532 edition of Chaucer immediately following the "fyfth and laste booke of Troylus."
- 4 Beauvau's translation has been edited by Gabriel Bianciotto, "Edition critique et commentée du *Roman de Troyle*" (dissertation, Université de Paris, 1977). The date of the translation and the possibility of its influence on

Chaucer remain uncertain. Whatever the case, at least fourteen extant manuscripts of Beauvau's work testify to its popularity. See Carla Bozzolo, *Les Manuscrits des traductions françaises d'œuvres de Boccace, XVe siècle* (Padua: Editrice Antenore, 1973). See also the new, thorough, but still inconclusive study of the question of dating by Michael G. Hanly, *Boccaccio. Beauvau. Chaucer. Troilus and Criseyde* (Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, 1990).

- 5 See Bozzolo, *Les Manuscrits*. Another translation of the *Teseida*, by Anne Malet de Gravelle, was published between 1520 and 1524.
- 6 *Mémoires*, ed. J. Calmette and G. Durville (Paris: Plon, 1924–25), cited in Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 138.
- 7 The phrase is Henryson's. In his *Siege of Thebes*, Lydgate concerns himself more with the "pith and expositioun" of the matter (318) as he puts it than with the human drama of its circumstances.
- 8 While the authors of the twelfth-century French *romans antiques* almost certainly wrote for listening audiences, it is clear from the evidence of the manuscripts that Boccaccio and Chaucer designed their poems to be read both silently in private and aloud in public.

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